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THE ENGLISH OF THE PULPIT

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THE MESSAGE OF THE AMERICAN PULPIT

BY

LEWIS H. CHRISMAN, A.M., LITT.D.

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WEST VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

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FOREWORD

THE purpose of this book is to give a clear understanding of the spirit and content of the message of the contemporary American pulpit. In endeavoring to render such a service we push the plow into virgin soil. We have upon our shelves hundreds of collections of sermons, but hitherto we have had no volume which summarizes what the modern pulpit has to say about this or that subject. It would, of course, be the epitome of futility to attempt in a book of this size to deal with all phases of religious thought discussed in current homiletical literature. I have, however, spared no time or labor in an earnest effort to give a comprehensive idea of the main trends of the sermon of to-day.

In doing this I have almost exclusively selected my excerpts from sermons already printed in books or other publications. It has been suggested to me that there are thousands of sermons which never have been, and never will be, published, which are equal in quality to those found in books and religious papers. This is undoubtedly true, and this is one of the reasons why it can be claimed that the printed sermonic literature represents a fair cross-section of the American pulpit, eliminating, to be sure, certain illiterate productions which naturally could not stand the test of print.

It will be noted that in several instances there are excerpts taken from religious writings other than ser-

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mons. For example, I have now and then availed myself of passages from various volumes of lectures on homiletical themes. I have done this because the material reproduced could have fitted admirably into a sermon and because the reproduction of it gives to the reader a more adequate idea of the sermonic literature of the period. With a few exceptions all of the discourses used have been preached since 1920 and a large number of them represent the past five years.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the men whose material comprises such an important part of the book. During the two years that I have been preparing its chapters I have again and again been impressed with the intellectuality and the spirituality of the American pulpit. To have studied intensively during this period over six thousand sermons has not been a grinding task but genuine pleasure. My constant association with some of the sermons with which I have come into contact during the preparation of this material makes me feel like numbering their authors among my friends, although in comparatively few instances have I met them in the flesh. I deeply regret that the limitations of space have prevented my giving excerpts from hundreds of other discourses which I regard as possessing high value. I also desire to express my gratitude to the publishers who have permitted me to use copyright material for illustrative purposes. Specific acknowledgment is made in connection with each excerpt.

There is one type of material which I present to the public with some degree of trepidation. The work contains a number of résumés of sermons. Sometimes I have quoted directly from the author. Other times it

has seemed better to echo his message and in part clothe it in my own words. In doing this I have labored assiduously to avoid misrepresenting the thought or language. I have, nevertheless, found the task so difficult that I dare not hope to have completely succeeded. Consequently, I trust that what merit the reader may find in these summaries he will credit to the author of the sermon, and that he will attribute any defects he may discover to the maker of the book.

L. H. C.

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THE MESSAGE OF THE AMERICAN PULPIT

I

THE PRESENT-DAY PREACHER'S INTERPRETATION OF GOD

"CAN I believe in God?" You do not have to. Nothing can compel you to believe in him. There's not an argument that cannot be doubted, not a fact that has not a counter fact. But woven in with that belief in God are all the sweet, tender, glorious values of human life. And because we cannot live without these, we cannot live without God.

I know little about electricity. I go to an Edison, a Pupin, and what he tells me confuses rather than enlightens. Nay, these men themselves confess they do not know what electricity is. But I enter my home, and, if the hall is dark, I press a button and radiance is all around me because I use what these men have found out. The unknown, the unknowable, is lighting my home. I do not know what God is. I go to the theologians, and what they say confuses rather than enlightens. Nay, the wisest of them confess how little they know, how their definitions break down. But in the dark, I turn to God in the simplest, best ways men have found for bringing him near and making him real; I call him "Father," as Jesus tells me to do; and light shines; and

> Out of darkness come the hands
> That reach through nature, molding men.

He who is Son of Man and Son of God, so truly one with us, what we would be if we could, says to us, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." He who has seen goodness, truth, love, personality, at their highest, has seen God. There our souls may rest, able to face life with serene confidence, and to "endure as seeing him who is invisible."[1]

Never has the divine energy been unemployed in the vast enterprises of the changing worlds. To the Jews who worried themselves about the breaking of the sabbath rest, Jesus said, "My Father has always worked, and I work." And that unceasing movement of the physical organism toward some as yet unknown goal, that evolution of forms which is yet to traverse unbelievable diameters of space and time, is all a part of the Father's work. As yet the universe is very young. The earth, with its millions of years gone by, is yet in its morning-time. And humanity, the latest arriving of its forms of life, is only in its infancy as yet. The writer of Genesis declared that God made man in his own image. Even more truly may it be said that God is making man in his image as rapidly as we give him the right of way. Never has there been a moment since the dim, far-off, mysterious beginnings in which God was not at work, realizing himself in the plastic materials of nature and humanity.[2]

When Christ said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," he put into the current conception of God an

[1]Merrill, William Pierson. Sermon: "Can I Believe in God?" *If I Had Only One Sermon to Preach*, edited by Chas. Stelze, p. 43. Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

[2]Willett, Herbert L. Sermon: "What Does God Do?" *The Christian Century*, July 28, 1927. Used by permission.

element of tenderness. He humanized the conception. He made it more vivid by inserting into the creed this *vox-humana* note and claiming that in his true and proper manhood, in his aspect and attitude toward men, he was giving them to understand the aspect and attitude of God. He taught that whatever men's preconceived notions about the Almighty may have been, they must now be checked by this latest manifestation and confirmed, modified, or abandoned according as they conformed or disagreed. According to this, whatever cannot be conceived as consistent with the life and teaching of Christ must be cut out of our conception of God. We are compelled to construe God through Jesus Christ or else to misconstrue him. God has chosen to know us through Christ and accept of us in him, and he requires us to do the same, that is, to know him and to accept of him as he is revealed in Christ.[3]

To the Christian living in the love of God, every day is a day of resurrection. There are daily burdens to bear. Of course there are. There are perplexing problems to wrestle with. There are hard paths to walk in. And the feet grow sore. Sometimes those who profess to love us say harsh things, and there is danger of the words rankling in the heart. Never mind. God is love. He defies time. It is a considerate love; it is an aggressive love; it is a progressive love; and it is a possessive love. No bigger task is given to any of us than to grow into that love. How can we do that? Only by setting ourselves to do the will of God, and trusting in Christ Jesus.[4]

[3]Howard, Henry. *The Peril of Power*, p. 95. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

[4]Watson, Robert A. Sermon: "God's Love and Time," *Boston Preachers*, edited by A. Avery Gates, p. 116. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

But the love of man for man, in terms of personal relationship, does not exhaust our problem. Beyond the narrow reaches of our present experience there is the vast area of the unseen and the unknown—this world of the infinite which hides the destiny of man, this world of the spiritual which hides the mystery and the secret of all life. It is here, in this realm of the unseen and the unknown, that God in all his wonder is to be found; and it is here that he is to be truly loved. To follow truth for its own sake, to do right because it is right, to love not merely men but man, to "Seek first the kingdom"—this is to love God. On the human side, I would define the love of God as the service of man in his eternal quest of the true, the beautiful, and the good. On the divine side, I would define the love of God as the sublimation of man's soul into the likeness of those infinite and eternal realities of the spirit which are God.[5]

All this must be a feeble commentary on the life of the friendly God. Is he less of a feeling friend than man? Do our betrayals of him bring no sorrow to the infinite spirit, and do our loyalties bring no joy? Were the Prophets right when they described a grieving God? And was the apostle speaking truth in the exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God?" If we have a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and if that wondrous Friend is denied by our conduct and wounded by our indifference, have we not a motive in him for our renewed friendship? And does he not have in his heart a holy eagerness that expresses itself in a constant pressure upon our hearts, as if he said, "Behold I stand, and

[5]Holmes, John Haines. Sermon: "What Does It Mean to Love God?," *Best Sermons, 1921*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 46. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

knock, and wait—for the open door?" Who can fail to believe that even the partial realization of this truth would bring to our land and to all lands the most piercing evangelism and the mightiest revival in all the history of God? And who can fail to believe, also, that the indifference of men cannot be overcome until men are made aware that with God there is no difference: and that the Prophet's picture of him is forever true—as of one bending out of infinite and tender yearning to give the assurance that is itself an invitation, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake?"[6]

Whatever in our experience is spontaneous and inevitable comes from our nature, and from the nature of our Maker we have acquired it. If you say we have inherited it, that is simply chasing the river to the last fountain from which it comes, the Hand of God, our Maker. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. In certain circumstances, the sense of indignation is spontaneous and inevitable; man would not be man without it. The same may be said of a sense of justice, and of compassion, and of the capacity for self-sacrifice; these great qualities are fountains that gush unbidden from our very Maker. It is he that has given us our sense of value and our power of devotion to it, and we must believe that his sense of human value is infinitely greater than ours, and that his sense of devotion to that value is also infinitely greater than ours. . . .

Sunrise and sunset place our world in splendor, in beauty ineffable; they do more: they reveal the glory

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[6]Hughes, Edwin Holt. Sermon: "For God's Sake," *The American Pulpit*, edited by Charles Clayton Morrison, p. 159. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

of light in all the universe. Whoever loves is indeed touched with a transforming grace; he is also made conscious of the eternal lover of mankind.[7]

If men could only be made to realize that always when they act contrary to their sense of right they are in open antagonism to God, how much more careful they would be in their conduct! In the deepest sense, law cannot be broken, but it always breaks those who do not work in harmony with it. This is what makes disrespect for law so serious a matter in American life. Large numbers of people are prone to forget that "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." For the law is inexorable and eternal; if it should fail, the universe would return to chaos. . . .

The older and narrower idea of the law has only a small place in the New Testament. This does not mean that either Jesus or St. Paul disregarded or discounted the imperative rule of righteousness. Doubtless Kant in his feeling of awe aroused by the contemplation of the moral law was in harmony with both Master and interpreter. But the essence of law is much too refined to be expressed in any code; it is an effluence, a spirit, a controlling will, and obedience in the fullest sense means the coördination of the human and divine motives, and the liberation of man's highest powers in the process. For only by obedience to what is true, holy, and just, does man become free from the rule of sin and death. And in such obedience he completes his partnership with God.[8]

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[7]Gordon, George A. Sermon: "The Kinship of God and Man." Used by permission of the author.

[8]MacCallum, John Archibald. *The Great Partnership*, p. 298. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

Accept the law of God and you become a child of freedom; despise that law and you become the slave of passion. Accept the laws of health and you live a happy, wholesome life; despise them and Nature will scourge you with whips of scorpions and plague you with disease. Accept the laws of the commonwealth and you move among your fellows majestic and independent as a king; transgress those laws and you must shun the face of day and skulk in the darkness like a hunted, hated thing. Wherever you turn, whether to religion or philosophy or history, whether to nature without or conscience within, whether to the health of soul or body, this lesson is written in letters of fire over all the universe: Obey law or die.[9]

There are some truths—the greatest of all—which can be discovered only in action. You try to say to some man, who needs to hear it said, that it is better to be chaste than licentious; that the fleeting intoxication of a lustful moment, followed as it always is by a sickening sense of uncleanness, is not to be compared to the delicious sense of physical and moral fitness that is born of a pure heart. "Prove it!" he retorts. Can you do it? No, only he himself can "prove" it. You try to say to some young or middle-aged flapper, who needs to hear it said, that a thoughtless, irresponsible, self-centered life is as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine, compared with the kind of life that Miss Jane Addams has lived in Hull House. "Prove it!" she demands. But, of course, you cannot "prove" it; the truth of what you are saying can be discovered only by experiment. You try to say

[9]Cavanaugh, John. Sermon: "The Conquest of Life," *Best Sermons 1925*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 44. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company.

to some tempted, troubled spirit, "There is one who is able to do for you far more abundantly than you ask or think. God is not the great illusion. He is the Great Reality in whom you live, if only you were aware of it, and in whom you might find rest for your weariness, strength for your weakness, light for your darkness, and salvation for your sin." "Prove it!" he pleads. But he alone can "prove" it by launching out into the deep of a great adventure.

How very significant that ancient Biblical story of the three Hebrew youths who, because they refused to surrender their most vital convictions, were cast into a burning fiery furnace, yet not consumed; with whom, as they stood unscathed in the fire, there appeared to be a fourth person "like a son of the Gods." . . . When men thought they were fighting for great ideals, giving their lives for a better world; when they themselves, in their heart of hearts, were embarked upon a great crusade, they could write, as one young American did to his father, "As I buckled on my gas mask, and trudged into the dark, I never felt so near to God.[10]

Man has all the mystery of nature: he has the added mystery of his soul life. To use Matthew Arnold's celebrated phrase, "Man must begin, know this, where nature ends. Man hath all which nature has, but more." If it requires God to explain the bodily mechanism, it requires his conscious activity to explain those ineradicable moral endeavors and incurably religious upwellings of the human heart. The necessity and the persistence in human life of its moral and religious ideals is evidence that God is stirring, achieving, living in the moral ac-

[10]Tittle, E. F. *The Religion of the Spirit*, p. 131. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

tivity of humanity. If a man bows before the Supreme Intelligence revealed in atoms, he should also give homage to that Divine Personality, who makes constant impact against the heart of man, and who is at the same time the source, the satisfaction, and the explanation of his soul life.

We are literally surrounded with, enveloped and engulfed in, a ceaseless energy which owes both its source and its intelligent activity to the presence and the power of God. As Lotze said, "God is a power immanent in all existence." As Wordsworth said, there is

> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things.

Why, then, need we depend upon ancient wonders reported centuries ago, when there are phenomena just as wonderful and awe-inspiring as ancient miracles which we may observe daily at our doors? Religion is not believing in ancient facts, but believing in the living God, whom we may find, not merely in the abnormal and the extraordinary, but forever mysteriously present in the ordinary.[11]

Life can be transformed only from within and the only thing that can pass the locked portals of the heart is a voice. Reason shot through and through with love is the only sure method as betwixt man and man, and love is victorious only as it is inexhaustible in patience and lifted upon occasion to those heights of all-compel-

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[11]Jones, Ilion T. Sermon: "The God of the Ordinary," *Christian Work*, March 13, 1926. Used by permission.

ling sacrifice of which the cross of Jesus Christ is witness and empowerment.[12]

The American pulpit of to-day does not ignore the mighty realities which lie at the foundation of all theologies. The widespread idea that the modern preacher deals with little passing themes rather than with the great essentials is a bromidic exaggeration circulated by the professional rehashers of current catch-words. No one who investigates the sermonic literature of the present decade can help being impressed that there are many preachers to-day who are not dealing with the superficial and the evanescent. Sermonic titles like the following come leaping from the pages of recent volumes of printed discourses: "In the Beginning God," "The Inadequacy of Human Devices," "The Image of God," "The Will of God," "The Discovery of God," "Can We Know God?" "God in Nature," "For God's Sake," "How One Man Discovered God," "The Law of God," "God's Love and Time," "God Through Personality," "Can I Believe in God?" "What Does It Mean to Love God?" "Does God Care?" and "The Eternal Reality."

I. No longer do we hear sermons that attempt to prove the existence of God by means of scholastic, logic-chopping syllogisms. Few in the present generation but would agree with the dictum to which Carlyle gave expression in one of his notebooks in the words: "To prove the existence of God, as Paley has attempted to do, is like lighting a lantern to seek for the sun. If you look hard by your lantern you will miss your search." Newman Smyth has sententiously said that a God whose existence could be proved by us would be a God

[12]Atkins, Gaius Glenn, *The Undiscovered Country*, p. 212. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Company.

made by us. This, nevertheless, does not mean that men and women are following wandering fires when they grapple with the age-old question, "Is it possible for me to believe in God?" It simply means that if a mind is open to belief in God, all of the truths of life evidence his presence and that, on the other hand, no one can point the man who is blind spiritually to the paths which lead to the City of God.

The modern preacher, as a rule, does not spend his time in refighting old battles and defending religion from the hypothetical assaults of long-buried enemies. The thinking preacher recognizes that the real enemy of theism is materialism. This philosophy of life which would reduce the universe to a dead mechanism and look upon man as a soulless automaton finds its most widely disseminated expression in the present decade in behavioristic psychology. This, however, is but one aspect of the mechanical conception of life. Any system of thought which undermines and overthrows belief in the personal, the spiritual, and the eternal values militates against belief in God. In a sermon entitled "Can I Believe in God?"[13] Dr. William P. Merrill takes the unimpugnable position that ultimately the question whether one believes in God is determined by the view he takes of fundamental reality. If a man believes that the spiritual is of more value than the material, that personality is above mechanism and that man is a living soul rather than an intricate machine, he will have no difficulty in believing in God. A somewhat similar defense of spiritual values is found in a sermon by Dr. George W. Richards on "The Inadequacy of Human Devices."[14] The text of this discourse is "For the bed is

[13] *If I Had Only One Sermon to Preach*, edited by Charles Stelze, p. 43.
[14] *The Reformed Church Pulpit*, edited by Frederick K. Stamm, p. 93.

shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it; and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." Isaiah xxviii: 20. This sermon has four heads. First, the preacher shows that materialism as a system of life is futile and unsatisfactory. His next step is to prove that agnosticism does not meet the needs of the human soul, that the agnostic is like a man "who enters a room, closes the shutters, draws the blinds" and refuses to look either at "the blaze of noonday or at the stars of the night." The third inadequate intellectual device is that of the humanitarian whose religion is based entirely on the principle of devotion to humanity. Noble as is such a creed, it is a highly unsatisfactory substitute for religion. It lacks dynamic and is built upon a shaky foundation. Under "Fourthly" is the crux of the sermon. Jesus Christ is a revelation of God. In a God like Jesus we find the explanation of some of the most abysmal mysteries of the universe. In such a God we can in reality live and move and have our being. He was in the beginning and still is, and in him we can find comfort and hope. In him as manifested in Jesus we find the only cure for sin. In the Christ-like God we can find strength in weakness, health in sickness, joy in sorrow, victory in defeat, and light in darkness. Man naturally wants to devote himself to a right cause with assurance of ultimate victory. This he can only do by being a co-worker with God. Any other interpretation of light is inadequate.

II. Most of the present-day preaching about God takes his existence for granted and seeks to interpret him. As the modern men of the pulpit attempt to explain the ways of God to those who sit before them they inevitably strike several dominant notes.

First, they stress the divine immanence. The God of

whom they preach is not the absentee God of eighteenth-century deism whom Carlyle describes as "sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of his Universe, and seeing it go." For over a century the trend has been away from this. The Methodist revival in the England of the eighteenth century preached the gospel of a God to whom the soul of the meanest grimy-faced miner of Cornwall was precious. These hard-handed, toil-worn, glowing-hearted, old-time Methodists sang:

> Come, O my God, thyself reveal,
> Fill all this mighty void:
> Thou only canst my spirit fill;
> Come, O my God, my God.

But the truth of an immanent God was dawning in the minds of men with far different backgrounds. The English poets of the Romanticism period, emancipated by the transcendentalism of Kant and his disciples, were seeing a new vision. It was William Wordsworth who wrote of him:

> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, mind of man,
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things.

The findings of a century of science, beginning with the publication in 1830 of Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, have also tended to develop a heightened sense of God's presence in his universe. The great poet-prophets of the days of Victoria had an undimmed consciousness of him who is "nearer than breathing

and closer than hands or feet." The same note was heard again and again in the pulpit. Preachers of varied creeds and backgrounds, John Henry Newman, Robertson of Brighton, Charles H. Spurgeon, Hugh Price Hughes in England, and Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, Matthew Simpson, Dwight L. Moody, and David Swing in America, all had something of the same vision of an immanent and loving God.

This heritage from the Victorian pulpit has not been cast to the winds. No idea is receiving stronger emphasis in contemporary preaching than the thought of God's presence in the world and his unfailing love for his children. The interpreters of God think of him in the words of the Quaker poet of Amesbury:

> Immortal Love, forever full,
> Forever flowing free,
> Forever shared, forever whole,
> A never-ebbing sea.

III. Noble as is the conception of an immanent God, a loving Father as revealed in the person and life of Jesus Christ, the contemporary preacher's interpretation of God is not without its limitations. One of these is the tendency to stress the human characteristics of God at the expense of his transcendence. We of to-day are not mystics. In our matter-of-fact civilizations we emphasize the concrete values. It is hard for us to realize that "life is more than meat." Even in our groping efforts to touch the hem of the garment of divine truth we are impatient in the presence of the unfathomable mysteries. Our teaching must be simple, matter-of-fact, and earthly. As a result our anthropomorphic theism has tended to humanize God to such an extent as to rob him of his divine attributes. A recently published

sermon[15] showing wherein God differs from man is almost unique. The outline of the body of the address is as follows:

1. We are still in the making. God is not so.
2. We are changing. God is immutable.
3. We are limited, but God's life is not to be compressed within our limitations.

Another rather serious limitation of twentieth-century homiletics is its lack of emphasis of the sterner characteristics of the divine nature. There is no doubt that this note was too dominant in the preaching of an earlier day. It certainly was not absent from the Calvinistic pulpits. And Calvinistic tendencies can be found in religious groups which, according to most church historians, have apparently no part in the Genevan heritage. This has not been necessarily an evil. Whatever the ethical limitations of the theology of Calvin, in all its forms it has been positive, rock-ribbed, and militant. In "M'Andrew's Hymn," than which Rudyard Kipling never wrote a more vigorious, dynamic, and truly inspired poem, the old Scotch fleet-engineer shows a sense of the fitness of things when he makes his engine suggest the logical, uncompromising theology of the rugged hills of John Knox and Thomas Carlyle:

From coupler-flange to spindle-guide I see Thy hand,
O God—
Predestination in the stride o' yon connectin'-rod.
John Calvin might ha' forged the same—enormous,
certain, slow—
Ay, wrought it in the furnace-flame—my Institutio,

[15]Richards, James Austin. *The Sufficient Gospel*, p. 119.

The trend, however, of the nineteenth century has been strongly against the super-logical, iron-clad theology of the fathers. Unitarianism's most distinctive contribution to religious thought has emanated from its reaction against the harshness of the Calvinism of the fathers. The tendency of the Methodistic movement, wherever and however it has manifested itself, has been to stress the love of God rather than his stern justice. As a result of these and other influences the American people have in recent years heard but little about the "justice" or the "sovereignty" of God or of allied doctrines. It is certain that this is not an undiluted blessing. An age of essential moral anarchy can profit by an emphasis of the age-old truth that God is not only to be loved but obeyed, that no man can violate his fundamental laws with impunity.

A gospel can be so amiable, so conciliatory, and sometimes even so pusillanimous that it gives a distorted idea of the Deity. That there is a marked tendency to a sterner emphasis in the preaching of the past decade is not a sign of a reactionary movement but rather of a trend toward a better-balanced, genuinely prophetic message. The homiletical productions of any age naturally reflect the life of the period. One cannot look for perfect attainment in any field, even in preaching. But the student of the contemporary sermon does not have to read many volumes without becoming firmly convinced that the pulpit of twentieth-century America is making an honest effort to interpret God to man.

II

JESUS IN THE PULPIT OF OUR GENERATION

Too long have we been thinking about Christ in the past tense. We must learn to think of him as present and future. The Christ of the New Testament and of the soul's communion is the perennial Christ. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and the living one. The resurrection translated him into the actual present where, to-day and to-morrow, he lives and reigns, teaches, heals and saves, and bestows upon his disciples and companions the living power to become sons of God. At once our path and our companion, our guide and our goal, he offers us both a center of rest and a freedom of movement. As Thomas à Kempis stated it, "Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living." Christ is the way, and our real success in the mission of life is in our ability to go with him into the Father's presence and love. He is the truth, and from him we learn to interpret the meaning of God, man, and nature. He is the life, and in him we discover the redeemer of our minds, the reviver of our souls, and the undying pledge of our immortality.[1]

Men have had gods aplenty; but what kinds of gods and god they have sometimes believed in! Even some

[1]McKeehan, Hobart D. Sermon: "Three Aspects of Christ," *The Reformed Church Pulpit*, edited by Frederick K. Stamm, p. 267. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Christian theologians have said to other Christian theologians that the God whom they believed in was their Devil. In the great word quoted from the lips of Jesus we have two descriptions of the true God which are equally satisfying. One of them is that we are to think of him as a Father; the other is that he is like Jesus. Of the two, perhaps the second, though less thought of, is the preferable. For the human heart can ask no more than that there be in the heart of the God of the universe the attitude and spirit that were in Jesus Christ.[2]

Now these things I have said not at all because I think they are adequate. We have not touched the garment's hem of what Jesus did. These things I have said because even such an insufficient sketch must make obvious that when we go back and find the historic Jesus we are dealing with no diminished figure. Can you get the tentacles of your imagination around the thing we have been saying—to be the kind of person who could give us our loftiest ideas of God, our noblest estimates of man, our highest ethical ideals, our deepest resources of spiritual power, our sublimest exhibition of confidence in moral forces, to be the kind of person who could do that? I am a liberal. I am not afraid to ask questions about anything. But the personality that is the kind of personality that can do that deserves his place at the center of our thought of God and our ideal of life. God was in Christ. What else can you say about him? God was in Christ. If you do not find God there you will not find him anywhere. And I agree with Lamb

[2]Dodge, D. Witherspoon. Sermon: "Life's Supreme Vision," *Great Southern Preaching*, edited by Charles M. Crowe, p. 51. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

that if Shakespeare should come in here this morning I would stand; but that if Jesus should come in I would kneel.

Well, what are we going to do about it? Do you really believe this? Then it means that you must put Jesus at the center of your life. Oh, church of the living God, exalt him in his modern time as you never have exalted him before! And you, fortunate members of this great and historic congregation, do you pick up the banner that your forefathers hand to you, and carry it out into this new generation, helping the modern world to say, too, "To whom then else should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and do know that thou art the Holy One of God."[4]

We miss the deepest meaning and value of his religion when we fail to enter into this daring spirit of his. What is Christianity as Jesus saw it and talked about it? Not that which certain evangelists have been too apt to make of it, a scheme whereby one may be cared for, kept safe, shielded from life's perils and hardships. You find little of that in Jesus' words, or in his experience. Did he "play safe"? He flung himself into the fight against sin, into the struggle with the indifference, the pain, the hardship of life, with a keen zest which was like a divine fire in his veins. And he did that, not that he might save us from thus throwing our lives into the fight, but that he might inspire and call us to the joy of moral combat. We wrong our Lord and his sacrifice, we miss the point of his cross-bearing, when we think that he bore the cross in order that we might be free from it. This is how he put the matter: "For their sakes I consecrate

[4]Fosdick, Harry Emerson. Sermon: "The Re-discovery of Jesus," *The Christian Century*, June 12, 1926. Used by permission.

myself, that they also might be consecrated in truth." He sacrificed, that we might sacrifice; he bore the cross that we might bear the cross; he laid down his life for us, that we might lay down our lives for the brethren. "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves." He calls us to be heroes, to plunge into the thick of life's struggle with daring and abandon, if we would share his joy.[4]

It is not a smaller Christ the world needs to-day. It is a Christ bigger than all the creeds, bigger than all the churches. Christ is all of that. We have not yet explored his personality. There are reserves in him we have not touched. There are margins of power and sympathy and leadership awaiting the call of world conditions yet to be developed. We may rest assured that as for the past, so for the future, this tall figure on the world's skyline will suffice for race leadership.[5]

Here is man as God intends him to be and as he can be. The perfect model is before us in Jesus Christ. God will not be satisfied with less; nor will man either be satisfied with less. It is a divine challenge, awakening all that is in man and making him seek the unity of Faith and the knowledge of the Son of God until he shall come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.[6]

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[4]Merrill, William Pierson. Sermon: "The Joy of the Lord," *Christian Work*, August 9, 1924. Used by permission.

[5]Vance, James I. Sermon: "Is Jesus God?" *If I Had Only One Sermon to Preach*, edited by Charles Stelze, p. 188. Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

[6]Dodge, D. Witherspoon. Sermon: "Life's Supreme Vision," *Great Southern Preaching*, edited by Charles M. Crowe, p. 54. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

The cross is the symbol of sacrifice. The ancient altar becomes the Christian cross. The offering becomes the Christian believer. To take up anything, one must give up something. To take up the cross, one must give up sin, superstition, hate, envy, and all the multitude of personal and selfish interests which cling so close to the human heart.

This offering which the Christian must make is not merely of material things, else there would be great difference between the rich and the poor, but it is spiritual and ethical. It must represent the best of heart and intellect of the disciple.

The cross is also the symbol of service. The cross symbolizes something heavy and hard—sometimes severe—for the one who bears it. Work of whatever kind is not easy. Sometimes it is tedious and monotonous; sometimes severe and galling. "No one who ever knew said it was easy to follow Christ." The way of the cross is easy to believe and understand, but it is hard to walk in it. It appeals to reason, but not to the will. We resent service and sacrifice. We seek the easy road to happiness, but it is not by that route. The way up is by going down. George Matheson understood it when he said:

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms, red,
Life that shall endless be.[7]

In his hours of leisure Jesus had his adoring friends, little groups of people whom he especially liked and

[7]Clippinger, Walter G. Sermon: "The Exaltation of Christ," *The Christian Herald*, June 16, 1928. Used by permission.

who adored him. It must have been a vast relief to resort to these friends after the crowds had worn him. Sometimes his disciples must have gotten on his nerves with their constant contentions and equally foolish disputes. Anyway, there was an inner circle within the twelve: Peter, James, and John. Jesus was particularly fond of Peter, strongly attached to him, and for the most part, found his company inspiriting. John must have been several years younger than Jesus, and his devotion to him is evident by the dying Saviour committing his mother Mary to John's tender care. It was the three intimates that he took with him when he withdrew from the rest. He permitted these close friends great freedom. He accorded them special privileges and confided in them fully.

Jesus dearly loved to visit a certain home at Bethany. They knew and understood him there. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were three friends whom he loved to visit. He probably was a guest there many, many times, and welcome always. It is a matter of more than passing importance that when Jesus was parted from his disciples and his ascension took place, the site of that event was apparently near Bethany. Bethany! What a hallowed spot it must have been for Jesus, and all because of his friends in that friendly home.

Friendship was a factor in Jesus' success. In the very nature of things a public man can have only a few intimate friends. One may have many acquaintances but only a few intimate friends. "Lend every man thine ear, but few thy voice," is good advice. Given a half-dozen loyal, understanding, sympathetic friends, and a man can brave opposition and battle against heavy odds. There must have been at least a dozen persons in Jesus' life, particularly during his public ministry, who

meant everything to him, upon whom he leaned and who in turn loved him dearly.[8]

In all the world there was manifest a tendency toward bondage and intellectual convention. The tide was running against the right of individual thinking and search. In Palestine the center of interest had lapsed into the most childish disputes about the observance of the Sabbath, while the Roman mind was passing from skepticism into a purely cynical distrust of man's power to attain to truth. The result was a picture of the world which gives to the reader a strong impression of out-worn human nature. The machine of humanity was running down.

Into this world Christ suddenly brought the Kingdom of God and set it up in men's hearts. In the field of national life he planted, one by one, the seeds of those great consciences which have grown to-day into the strong trees of Christian institutions and demands. Substituting for the mere lust of empire or the blind impetuosity of rebellion the conception of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood, not only of men, but of nations, he brought to the world "new chances, impulses, and guarantees of civilized life; he brought into society a morality serious and powerful, and one which would wear and last and would withstand the shocks of time." It was "strangely gentle, strangely tender, strangely inflexible," and it reinforced the idea of the unity of the human race, after which the Roman Empire had been groping.[9]

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[8]Jones, Edgar De Witt. Sermon: "The Private Life of Jesus," *The Christian Herald*, April 21, 1928. Used by permission.

[9]Kelman, John. Sermon: "If Christ Had Not Come," *Christian Work*, November 7, 1925. Used by permission.

This is the very essence of the Gospel of Jesus: that the strong must bear the burdens of the weak. How different is Jesus' message from the message of science. Science says let them perish; the weak jeopardize the species. It preaches "the survival of the fittest." But Jesus says, "No! Seek and save the lost." He preaches the survival of the most unfit. And this is the glory of his Gospel. But this same Gospel does not encourage weakness. It says be strong, make something of yourself; have a high ambition, for he aims too low who aims beneath the stars. In our mission of help to the weak we must always have a loving regard for human life.[10]

At the memorable Chicago Congress of Religions during the World's Fair, when it seemed as if Buddhism and other beliefs were pressing their claims for recognition with a possibility of establishing their case, Joseph Cook, with unerring accuracy, placed his finger upon the weak spot in the whole system of pagan beliefs by asking each representative, "What have you for the sin of fallen man? Can any of your religions wash the bloodstains off the hands of Lady Macbeth?" With bowed heads came the answer from all alike, "We do not pretend to cure sin." "Then," said Joseph Cook, "Christianity establishes its claim as the universal religion of the world, for 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' and 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'"

The redemption of Jesus Christ is full and complete.

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[10]Woodroofe, Robert William. Sermon: "The Master's Compassion," *Preachers and Preaching in Detroit*, edited by Ralph Milton Pierce, p. 279. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

Not only does it remove the guilt of sin, but it also destroys the power of sin. Christ alone can make the unclean, clean; the ignoble, noble; the impure, pure; and because he is conqueror over sin, death, and the grave, his eternal truth goes marching on, and in the white light of his holy life no evil can live to perpetuity.[11]

When he heard the Pharisees in the Synagogue murmuring because he had healed a cripple on the Sabbath, "He was angered," and he gave them a look which they never forgot. When he saw the religious leaders of his day guilty of hypocrisy and cruelty, he denounced them to their faces in words so terrible that a minister hardly dares to read them from his pulpit. And when he found the Temple of Worship filled with noisy, dickering, dishonest traders, he drove them out. It takes some measure of manly strength to drive a bunch of dishonest Jews out of a place where they are making money. He was a Jew himself, and it angered him that those men were denying all the high traditions of their race. He sought to recall them to their task of moral leadership and to make his Father's house once more a house of prayer. His righteous purpose had always an edge on it.

He did all these things because he was a man, the perfect, the typal, the representative man, the Son of Man! Touching his own personal feelings he was charity incarnate. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him"—he cared little about that. When a nasty little Samaritan village refused him entertainment overnight because he was a Jew, he did not burn it up as his disciples suggested—he went on to another village which would entertain

[11]Akers, Lewis Robeson. *The Red Road to Royalty*, p. 38. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

him. When he reached the close of his life, his enemies nailed him to the Cross and put a crown of thorns on his head in mockery of his claims about his kingdom. They stood off and jeered at him in his hour of pain and some of the meanest of them actually walked up and spat upon him. All he said was, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He cared not one whit for personal insult, but, in the presence of cruelty, hypocrisy, inhumanity which was injuring others, he showed an indignation which a writer of that day called "the wrath of the lamb." It was not personal petulance—it was wrath with a moral basis. He fought the good fight of faith against the evil of the world.[12]

Surely, if human experience can register reality, the testimony of the Christian ages is overwhelming—in heroic faith, in lofty character, in fruitful service—that Christ does live with men, age by age, even as he promised. Augustine, Bernard, Francis, Wesley, Woolman, Phillips Brooks, men of many ages, many races, many types of temperament and training, tell of one who walked with them along the way. For love of him men have endured the anger of bigots and the terror of the stake, and counted it a title of glory. Nor must we forget the multitude of those who have followed him over the hills and valleys of the years, finding fellowship in loneliness, deliverance from the tyranny and cruelty of time, and victory over death in his companionship. To them Christ was a sheltering rock in a weary land, a wayside spring, a teacher of faith and a savior of the soul—his words the philosophy of life, his

[12]Brown, Charles Reynolds. *What Is Your Name?* p. 104. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

story the one everlasting romance in a prosaic and terrifying world. No mere ideal, no vague and holy memory, can explain an experience at once so personal, so creative of the highest values, so benign in the life of humanity.

Along the highway of the years we trace the footprints of the Pilgrim Christ in art, in song, in life, reflecting his fellowship with those who loved and followed him. On the Roman roadside by the *Domine Quo Vadis*, in the Hall of the Round Table at Winchester, in the clearing in the woodland where the Merciful Knight drew rein before the Crucifix, we follow him. We see him in Francis of Assisi, with his pity, his joy, his vision of life as love and comradeship; and in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. He was in the troubled and romantic marbles of Angelo, in the stained glass of Burne-Jones, in the *Les Misérables* of Victor Hugo, in the Dickens stories of little children, and he was with Lincoln in the White House. He was with Paton in the New Hebrides, saving his sanity beside a lonely grave, amid dark, hostile faces. Wherever there is a note of pity in art, a white flower of the spirit in poetry or in life, a voice pleading for the poor, a champion of those who fail, a defender of the defeated and world-broken, there, somehow, is Christ. Ever the Fisher of Men seeks to entangle us in his net of loving-kindness, returning again and again to such as have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Evermore the Pilgrim Christ leads the journeying generations, and he is with us in this new, strange, clever, logical, agitated, erotic, wistful modern world. He is here, as at Emmaus, first as a great companion, and never has he been more needed than to-day.[13]

[13]Newton, Joseph Fort. Sermon: "The Pilgrim Christ," *The Ambassador*, March, 1923. Used by permission.

Jesus came in the name of the highest in the universe; his idea was absolute worth at the heart of the universe, absolute love, infinite compassion toward the children of men. He came in the name of a faith that is worth believing, that is worth living for, working for, and dying for; and we bid him welcome to-day, as they did of old, because he lifts up the banner that is a symbol for the perfect love at the heart of the universe.

Again Jesus comes in the name of the highest in ourselves. How hard it is for us sometimes to keep our faith in ourselves; how largely animal we are, how selfish and cowardly, we know better than anybody else. He comes to us to-day—in the name of our essential spirituality; we are "consubstantial" with God—one of the great words from ancient Christianity—of the same nature as the being of the eternal, children of the ultimate and the uttermost; all else is incidental, instrumental, temporary; the deep within, or the height within, answers to the eternal height in the universe. . . . Jesus came in the name of the most beautiful thoughts, the thoughts that have illumined human life, and in the name of the most beautiful words that were ever spoken; they are fit to be the litany of the world; he reached the deepest into the minds and hearts of men of any prophet who ever spoke a word. What a contradiction we have here of the vulgar custom of the world. If we could see only a part of what he saw, if we could feel only a little of what he felt toward God and toward men, and if we could coin, from the depths of a pure, passionate heart, his words of excellence, human worth, and beauty, do you not think that needy human beings would run to us with all the power that they did of old to him?[14]

[14]Gordon, George A. Sermon: "The Prophet of the Highest," preached April 5, 1925. Used by permission of the author.

The fact of Christ is the basic truth of the Christian religion. Therefore it is to be expected that the preëminent thoughts of Christian preaching should group themselves about the life and teaching of the Son of Man. The present-day preacher discusses Christ as the central point of Christian civilization, as the power which can help man conquer sin, as the force which enables faltering, stumbling, hesitating, blundering, erring man to attain his highest possibilities.

On May 18, 1924, on the occasion of the celebration of the opening of the famous City Temple, London, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick preached a sermon entitled "The Rediscovery of Jesus," which epitomizes much that is being said in many pulpits. Dr. Fosdick begins his discussion of the topic by asking if it is right to make the assertion that Christianity stands or falls, lives or dies with the personality of Jesus. He then answers his question by showing how Jesus is the progressive uniting point of Christianity, that he is the "magnet that holds these divers elements together." His next thought is that Christianity is not finished but susceptible to change, that while the gospel has been helping Christianize the world, the world has been paganizing the gospel. If this is the case, it follows that Christianity needs to be reformed and that the nominal Christianity to which so many profess a lip devotion should be superseded by a genuine Christianity. It has been to accomplish this that the great ecclesiastical reformers of the history of Christendom have raised the banners of revolt. And every great reformation has had at its center the idea of re-discovering Jesus and attempting to work out his principles in the life of the generation. This always means obeying the call to live lives of sacrificial endeavor. Yet there might be those who would ask the

question: "What right has Jesus to demand such a sacrifice of us?" In answering this question Dr. Fosdick summarizes the fundamental teaching of the twentieth-century pulpit in regard to the place of Jesus in history and in life:

1. Jesus has given us the loftiest conception of God.
2. He has given us our loftiest estimate of man.
3. We owe our loftiest ethical ideas to him.
4. The historic Jesus has opened to men hitherto unknown resources of spiritual power.
5. He has given us the most sublime exhibition in all history of confidence in spiritual forces.

A careful study of the above sermonic heads will show that they furnish a fairly adequate outline of the typical preaching of to-day upon this theme. That Jesus has given the loftiest conceptions of man and God is an idea frequently discussed in both conservative and liberal pulpits. The same can be said of the truth that we owe our loftiest ethical conceptions to him. The fourth thought, that of Jesus as a source of spiritual power, is a general statement with many ramifications. Under this head, for example, would come the great historic doctrine of the atonement. In the preaching of this and of other age-old truths the modern pulpit has been reasonably successful in guarding against two homiletical errors. First, it has avoided theological terminology. It has elucidated deep-rooted, far-reaching, world-shaking doctrines in language which is comprehensible to the man who understands only the language of his own generation. Secondly, our contemporary preachers have, for the most part, eschewed that affected, superpious, sub-intelligent dialect of the pulpit which has at

some periods caused many a sincere truth-seeker to recoil in disgust from the message of the Church. A reader of the sermonic literature of the generations cannot help being impressed that there has been through the years a marked tendency to fall into this artificial diction, especially in speaking of Christ. Side by side with this and closely allied to it has been the custom of indulging in patronizing, bombastic, and frequently insincere eulogies of Jesus and calling the result "gospel preaching." Of course, there are still some signs of this, but in general the preaching about Jesus from the American pulpit is thoughtful, sincere, and genuinely religious.

The use of non-theological language in the pulpit might give the superficial observer the impression that the doctrine of the atonement is being ignored by the preacher of this generation. Such, however, is not the case. Although it is possible that there is some confusion in regard to certain aspects of this phase of religious thought, the broad elemental truth of the atonement is the basis of numerous sermons every Sunday in the year. There seems to be a practical unanimity in the opinion that the pulpit should not defend the pedantic, mechanical interpretations which make the cross a matter of sordid bargaining. The enlightened preacher does not explain Christ's life by death by means of unethical dogmas. Here the note of certainty is clear and well-defined. Possibly not quite the same degree of sureness exists on the positive side. There always will be varied creeds. Yet it is affirmed with a high degree of emphasis that Christ bore the burden of the sins of the race and that through him we may obtain forgiveness of sins.

Another pronounced note in the discussion of Jesus

is the emphasis upon various aspects of his character and personality, his graciousness, his joy and his courage. As it would be easy to collect several volumes of sermons dealing with these themes only two of these topics can be touched upon here. First, the joy of Jesus is an arresting and fruitful topic for homiletical thought. Certain types of intellectual amateurs have pictured the Teacher of Nazareth as a lugubrious prophet of gloom. It was Swinburne who wrote of him:

> Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean,
> The world hast grown gray with thy breath!

Misleading as such an interpretation is, it is not to be taken with especial seriousness. No one would dream of looking for religious insight in the cloying decadence of the Victorian singer. For this reason his misinterpretation is not to be taken nearly so seriously as the warped teachings of certain unilluminated pietists who have read their own lack of imagination and aridity of soul into the most radiant personality of history. Christ was no monstrosity of solemnity. Unlike John the Baptist he was no ascetic dweller in the wilderness. He met people where they were and drew them to him by the strong cords of a magnetic personality. He went among the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish. No student of biography can read the Synoptic Gospels without realizing that they deal with a man who loved life, who enjoyed people, and thrilled with the zest of the human adventure. Then, too, his personality was enriched and dynamized by the saving grace of a humor so universal in its appeal that it transcends the limits of time and place. Some of his comparisons have been a source of perennial pleasure to the

discriminating lover of real literature. An example is his characterization of those who carefully cleanse the outside of the cup and leave untouched the inside from which they drink, or that of the people who punctiliously strain at the gnat but swallow the camel. And possibly best of all is the one which in Moffatt's translation reads thus: "Why do you note the splinter in your brother's eye and fail to see the plank in your own eye?" The humor of Jesus is one of the evidences of his genuine humanity. The fact that the Son of Man enjoyed the adventure of life has served as the basis of a number of contemporary sermons and will continue to be a factor in the dynamic preaching of the living Word.

In Fosdick's *The Manhood of the Master* (1913), a book which has had an enormous influence on recent preaching, emphasis is laid upon the more virile human characteristics of Jesus, two chapter headings being "The Master's Indignation" and "The Master's Fearlessness." The stress laid in these chapters upon the virile qualities of Jesus has been typical of much vigorous, trenchant, ethical preaching during the past fifteen years. Sermonic material of this type gives the hearer a new and winsome Jesus. We see him at Nazareth walking unscathed through a hostile mob, dominating them by sheer force of manhood. We find that everywhere he drew men and women toward him by the invisible cords of a strong, radiant personality. At Jerusalem, single-handed, he drove the grasping moneychangers from the temple of Jehovah. He denounced the hypocritical Pharisee in words so fraught with fury that language seems almost to break down beneath their weight.

The ethical implications of such a depiction of the Christ are deep and far-reaching. Such a Jesus was no

namby-pamby weakling. He dared do all that became a man. His call is not to man's weakness but to his strength. He who lacks what Roosevelt called "the fighting edge" has not caught that spirit which was in Christ Jesus. "Let well enough alone," "It's no use to make enemies," "It will all come out right in the end." Such cowardly sentiments are entirely incompatible with the teachings of the great Teacher. He came not to bring ignoble peace but a sword. The man who follows his teachings does not compromise with wrong but battles against it. This note in contemporary preaching is certain to make an appeal to those who were not especially inspired by the idea of a "meek and lowly" Jesus.

Another highly important aspect of our contemporary preaching about Jesus is that which has to do with the interpretation of his words. In fact, there is no phase of Christian preaching which is more important than this. We learn about Jesus by reading what we can in regard to the facts of his life, but we learn immeasurably more through the study of what he said. Any preaching which really explains the words of Jesus is certain to be good preaching. It is very probable that never in the history of the Christian pulpit have preachers shown a more pronounced tendency to take their texts from the teachings of Jesus. Yet the possibilities of this type of preaching are by no means utilized to the full. In the average collection of sermons not more than one text out of five is from the utterances of the Master, and as a rule the proportion is somewhat less.

Three books which illustrate the efficacy of the exposition of these teachings are *The Parables of Jesus* by Dr. GeorgeA. Buttrick of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, *These Sayings of Mine* by

Dr. Floyd Douglas, and *Preaching Values in New Translations of the New Testament* by Dr. Halford E. Luccock of the Yale Divinity School. The second mentioned of these books is not written in sermonic form, but there is no doubt that a considerable portion of its contents was prepared for pulpit usage. The confessed purpose of the book is the clarifying of the elemental truth, which has frequently been neglected while the Church has devoted its energies to tithing of mint, anise, and cummin and "staging impressive forensic battles which have in many instances been mere quarrels with the dictionary." The book is written on the assumption that the Gospel of Christ can save the world and that it is the business of the Church to make an honest effort to find what that gospel is.

In this work[15] Chapter III bears the title: "Many are called but few are chosen." Three studies centering about the title sentence are grouped together in the chapter. All of them illustrate the truth that of the many that are called few are chosen. First, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins is utilized to clarify the thought that first things must be put first, that it behooves us in life to prepare for emergencies. They who fail to meet the fundamental requirements of life's responsibilities will find the doors of opportunity shut in their faces. Secondly, the same lesson is reënforced by the parable of the feast and especially of the man who refused to wear the wedding garment. The refusal to wear the garment was in itself insignificant, but the failure to conform in so slight a matter showed a lack of appreciation of a high privilege. Few are chosen but the few must conduct themselves as chosen. Thirdly, the idea is further elucidated by the story of James and

[15]Douglas, Floyd, *These Sayings of Mine*, p. 6.

John asking to be placed first in Christ's kingdom. His answer was: "By what right do you indulge in that hope? What reason do you have for asking for distinctions which others do not have? Are ye able to drink of my cup?" The called must be willing to pay the price of being called. Distinction always means responsibility.

Dr. Buttrick's *The Parables of Jesus* also brings light to bear upon the sayings of the Master. Chapter XVIII[16] bears the caption "The God of the Lost" and deals with "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" and "The Parable of the Elder Brother." An idea of the nature of the approach in these studies can be given by briefly noticing the first thought. The first assertion of the young man is that of self-will: "Give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me." The monotony of home was irksome. The parental restraints were galling. Life beckoned. He wanted freedom, physical and moral. His idea was to get away from the old sanctities of the race. Then came the whirl of happy days and sparkling nights, the scattering of substance which he had not gathered. He lived for the joy of the minute. Such a life disintegrates the will, makes chaos of the imagination and ultimately breaks the body. The man who lives for pleasure becomes the slave of pleasure. The seeker for unrestrained license eventually finds himself in the pen with the swine. "When he came to himself." "That is as divine a word as any from the lips of Jesus." The man who dwells in the far country in the mire of the swine pen is disloyal to his real self. When a man comes to himself he turns his face in the direction of the homeland. Dr. Buttrick's study of these parables once more shows that they are all rich in ethical and spiritual implications. In his analysis of

[16]Buttrick, George A., *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 189.

the Parable of the Prodigal Son there are new truths of life which shine out from every side of this "most divinely tender and most touchingly human story ever told on our earth."

In Luccock's *Preaching Values in New Translations of the New Testament* the words of Jesus are used in a different way as the basis of homiletical thought. The book contains in the neighborhood of 150 brief sermons. These discourses vary in length. Some of them cover several pages while a few consist of a single paragraph. As the title implies, the texts are taken from the recent translations of the New Testament, Weymouth's, Goodspeed's and Moffatt's. The book as a whole is an evidence of the sermonic possibilities of the modern translations. Moreover, the large number of texts taken directly from the utterances of Jesus demonstrate that they are peculiarly suggestive and vital to this generation. Among these texts are: "If salt becomes insipid, what can make it salt again?" Matt. v: 13 (Moffatt) "Do not pray by idle rote like pagans." Matt. vi:7 (Moffat); "Let what you say be simply 'yes' or 'no.'" Matt. v:37 (Moffat); "Pagans make all that their aim in life." Matt. vi: 32 (Moffat); "If you salute only your near relatives, what praise is due to you?" Matt. v: 47 (Weymouth); and "You must not be like the hypocrites. They are fond of standing and praying at the corners of the wider streets." Matt. vi: 5 (Weymouth).

The life, the personality, and the teaching of Jesus are influences which are mightily felt in all Christian preaching. Any ethical or spiritual discussion which ignores the basis of the Christian religion is not real preaching. All of the chapters in this book have to do with the teachings of Jesus as applied to the life and the problems of the age in which we live. Any movement

for social betterment, for instance, is matter of applying the Gospel of Jesus to the concrete social questions of a given period.

All religion is applied religion. A sermon dealing only with academic or historic questions cannot connect itself with the fundamental experiences of everyday human beings. Consequently the preacher of vision concerns himself with the living Christ rather than with Jesus as a factor in the working out of a dehumanized system of theology. We must think of him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the Way because he is the preëminent teacher of righteous living. He is the Truth because in him is the revelation of God and a key to the most abysmal mysteries of the universe, and the Life because he stands for the most genuine reality which man can experience.

III

THE PREACHER AS AN INTERPRETER OF HIS AGE

THE temper of the modern man is an epitome of the universal mood. He is a stranger to the tranquil philosophy of Saint Paul: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound." "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." Whether abased or abounding the individual of contemporary times is discontented with himself. He is busy pulling down his old barns and building larger ones, but his soul is ill at ease, nervously asking, "What lack I yet?" He builds for himself a dwelling-place of magnificent proportions, furnishes it with luxurious appointments, and is disillusioned because it does not call out to him: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Mechanical ingenuity has been taxed in the invention of labor-saving devices, but they have failed to ease our yokes of worry or lighten our burdens of care. To-day man moves from place to place with miraculous speed, sailing through the air, rolling over the ground, moving under the sea, and indeed gauging his every activity to the greatest possible rapidity. We work, play, and pray under the whiplash of hurry. But in our reflective moments we face the satirical question of the hero of Bojer's novel, *The Great Hunger*, "Where are we going that we are in such a hurry?" The modern young man and young woman are over-sophisticated, and wonder why life has lost its zest and romance. They hunt for thrills in

travel, fantastic amusements, overdone colors, and glaring lights. We loudly boast of our progress and fill the future with enlarging plans, but are uncertain whether our progress means real achievement or a Tower of Babel with its confusion of tongues and noisy contentions. The man of to-day is strenuously energetic, thoroughly efficient, eagerly progressive, and very unhappy. He has gained the whole world and is dissatisfied with his possessions.[1]

We are perfecting motors which have reduced friction to a minimum, but we are developing a society which has increased friction and lawlessness to a maximum. America is amazing the world with the size, speed, and power of her physical achievements. She is also amazing the world with her prodigal waste of human values brought about by social mismanagement and crime. . . . Our Western World must find some means of breaking this thralldom of things. We need a twentieth-century Robinson Crusoe to remind us how many values of life would remain if we were deprived of the accessories of living which we now think are the essentials. We need to follow with the measuring rods of our minds the footsteps of Jesus as he led his countrymen out of the competitive market place of Jerusalem to the hillside, where, in the presence of the flowers of the field and the fowls of the air, he taught them the true values of life's simplicities.[2]

Perhaps for the majority of men in the fight for the supremacy of the spiritual in life, sensualism or animal-

[1]Frazer, John William. *The Untried Civilization*, p. 46. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

[2]Sockman, Ralph W. *Men of the Mysteries*, pp. 26 and 29. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

ism is not the supreme enemy of the soul-life that he encounters. A man can visualize his animal passions for the gross beasts that they are—and conquer them. But the horrid misrepresentations of thought which smear the sanctities of life with the slime of unbelief and persuade a man, in the name of reason, that he is not a living soul but a plaything of a materialistic and mechanistic process of which he is a part—this is the destruction of souls whether of men or of nations. And when the sorcery of naturalistic thinking is thus cast over his whole rational life, bewildering him by its apparent reasonableness, confusing his sense of value, pointing to the animal origins of holy things, making him distrust the worth of morality and character, seducing him to the worship of force—then it is that heroic measures must be taken by him to extricate himself. Faith is partly intellectual in its nature; and when the rational strand in moral faith rots and weakens, its glory has departed. Thinking by mechanical patterns, which enthrone cause and effect; biological method that measures everything by origin and not by capacities and goals; the temptation set before the reason to deny the validity of life's higher meanings and values—this is an evil that threatens the minds of men to-day. Under its spell, many heroic ideals and purposes have withered. How the spirit of high adventure has weakened, defeated by the meaninglessness of life as a mechanism. For the affirmative attitude of belief, of mental confidence, that enthrones the great meanings of life in power, is still the condition of great spiritual achievement. As in the days of Jesus we can do no mighty works in the atmosphere of unbelief.[3]

[3]Youtz, Herbert Alden. *The Supremacy of the Spiritual*, p. 27. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

I would speak to you to-day, therefore, on "the Gospel for a day of disillusionment." I call it a "day" rather than an age, for I hope it will prove a passing mood rather than a permanent state, if the Church and her ministry can grasp their message, their gospel for the day, and preach it effectively. But while it does last, this mood of disillusionment is most serious, oppressive, and appalling. It is practically universal. It pervades all peoples and possesses all classes. It dims vision and paralyzes effort. It is peculiarly disheartening to all idealists and reformers. Only the blind materialists, particularly the profiteers, are untouched by it. To all others a night of gloom whose darkness may be felt seems to have spread like a pall over all the earth. . . . If ever a day needed a gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God on earth, with all its fresh springs of hope and endeavor, its unfailing and inexhaustible sources of inspiration, its indefatigable faith and unquenchable joy, its irrepressible yet rational optimism, it is this day in which we live.[4]

Our world is full of dilettanti in the colleges, anarchists in the state, atheists in the Church, Bohemians in art, sybarites in conduct, and ineffably silly women in society, who have felt, and occasionally studied, the scientific and naturalistic movement just far enough and superficially enough to grasp the idea of relativity and to exalt it as sufficient and complete in itself. Many of them are incapable of realizing the implications for conduct and belief which it entails. Others of them, who are of the lesser sort, pulled by the imperious hungers of the flesh, the untutored instincts of a restless

[4]Williams, Charles D. *The Prophetic Ministry for To-day*, p. 157. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

spirit, hating Hellenic discipline no less than Christian renunciation, having no stomach either for self-control or self-surrender, look out on the mass of endlessly opposing complexities of the modern world and gladly use that vision as an excuse for abandoning what is indeed the ever-failing but also the ever-necessary struggle to achieve order, unity, yes, even perfection.

To them, therefore, the only way to conquer a temptation is to yield to it. They rail nonsensically at all repression, forgetting that man cannot express the full circle of his mutually exclusive instincts, and that when he gives rein to one he thereby negates another; that choice, therefore, is inevitable and that the more exacting and critical the choice, the more valuable and comprehensive the expression. So they frankly assert their choices along the lines of least resistance and abandon themselves, at least in principle, to emotional chaos and moral sentimentalism.[5]

Neither pessimists nor optimists have the ultimate answer to our question concerning civilization's balance sheet, but only *truthists*—men who with level eye face the facts squarely and are neither presumptuous nor afraid. Civilization's balance sheet shows a surplus at the moment, but there is a possibility that it speedily may be wiped out. Another World War would spell world wreck. The prolongation of the industrial conflict will insure revolution sooner or later. Further development of demagoguery and selfish partisan politics will doom democracy. The machine has grown too big and complex for the men that have to operate it.

[5]Fitch, Albert Parker. *Preaching and Paganism*, p. 82. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

What are we to do about it? We cannot move back from Solomon to David: history does not so proceed. We cannot get rid of our civilization unless we are willing to burn down the house to drive out the rats. The one sensible thing to do is to speed up the making of manhood. An efficient spiritual life is the solution of every social problem. Sometime, somehow, a generation of men will put first things first—character before cash, brotherhood above battle cries, goodness above greed. Solomon's civilization would have endured, and his son would not have seen the kingdom disrupted, if the spirit of David's rule at its best had been preserved and promoted. Our present task is not easy, but it is not impossible. We must saturate civilization with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. Then, and not till then, can we lie down and sleep in peace. Then we may dismiss the armed guard that now stands with swords on thighs because of fear in the night.[6]

Not only is fear useful in morals, in behavior, in the daily routine; it is also inspirational in religion. If it hinders millions from transgressing the boundaries of social existence, it also keeps millions more on the upward path that leads to light. The Bible tells in one place of perverts who have not the fear of God before their eyes. To their corrupted vision ethical and spiritual distinctions do not exist.

They are encouraged in this fatal blindness by contemporary writers who gravely inform us that an upstanding rational human creature need not entertain any qualms on this issue. They insist that he shall liberate himself from the ignominious superstitions of the

[6]Moore, John M. Sermon: "Civilization's Balance Sheet," *Christian Work*, March 27, 1926. Used by permission.

past, and do as he pleases, without reference to any imaginary heaven or hell to come. They assure us there is no such bliss to be won or agony to be shunned; that these are the inventions of preachers who place a fictitious emphasis on them in order to make their own calling secure, and that the life of sacrificial love is all humbug. Righteousness according to a fixed standard of authority is a delusion, and the rectitude it demands, a snare. So runs the story of not a few modern would-be philosophers.

I wonder, when I read these maunderings, how their authors would relish being subjected to their own theories. They cannot succeed in propagating them because man's instinct for self-preservation is enlisted antagonistically. He is fully aware that preachers do not have to publish the sure and certain evils attending sinful conduct. Doctors and alienists will take care of that publication. Hospitals, insane asylums, and lazar houses proclaim the fruits of iniquity to the very heavens, and some scenes within their precincts are lively intimations of a real perdition.

Hence the Intellectuals who peddle this pestilential stuff have no permanent hold on society. But this is not to say they do no harm. Quite otherwise: they poison the existence of youth, they purvey vileness to maturity, they infect every rank and condition where degeneracy has bitten deeply, and tragedy frequently completes the contagion.

Oscar Wilde waxed eloquent about living the untrammeled life. Its finish for him was Reading Jail, disgrace, and exile. He mournfully owned his terrific blunder when he said: "I thought I could do as I pleased." Who will dispute that it would have been infinitely better for Wilde to have borne fear of wrong

than to have wasted his wit and brilliancy in apologies for vice?[7]

The most sacrosanct thing in our country to-day is this creation of the economists known as the American standard of living. Talk about the trouble that can be stirred up by aspersions on the flag, or suggestions of disarmament, or even by criticisms of the wisdom of our founding fathers! All these issues would seem very minor indeed alongside the trouble that would break out if it were suggested that some course be adopted which would place this sacred American standard of living in jeopardy. You can justify the tariff, you can justify the exclusion acts, you can justify the most expensive army and navy on earth, you can justify anything we have in this country if you can make it appear necessary to the maintenance of our American standard of living. And what a standard it is! I notice that the slogan of the automobile manufacturers is now, "At least two cars for each family."

That may sound all right for us. How about this broken and poverty-stricken world that lies all around us? How long can we expect other peoples to remain content with their poverty while our newspapers and our movies and our tourists help to impress on them our wealth? How far can we expect them to let us lead them toward a better world until we have found some way to identify our fate with theirs, to take their woes in some degree upon ourselves, to rid ourselves of the moral and economic isolationism that now characterizes us? There is an etymological connection between the words "salvation" and "safety," but the man or nation

[7]Cadman, S. Parkes. "I Fear," *Christian Herald*, August 4, 1928. Used by permission.

who seeks safety by that choice foregoes the life of a savior.[8]

It is because civilization is becoming almost as impersonal and mechanistic as nature that Spengler cannot be altogether wrong in regarding modern civilization itself as destructive of religious faith. Wherever personality is degraded and personal values outraged, whether in the world of nature or in the world of man, our faith in a good God is seriously challenged. Timid and sophisticated souls are bound to lose their faith through such a challenge. Only those are able to maintain their faith who are simple and naïve enough to live lovingly and nobly in a cruel world until their sight is clarified, and in the purity of their heart they will see God. Faith in God is a moral and mystical achievement for which all the resources of heart and will and mind are required. No one can be lifted into the presence of God by a syllogism.[9]

Deifying change, the multiplication of discoveries and inventions, the rapid changing of life, have gone to the brain of our race, intoxicating us. Change has been made into a God and set up in the temple of life. Dignifying it by the term "evolution," the apostles and priests of the new declare that whether we will or no we are being lifted up into the highest and holiest. Instead of thinking things through, we leave it to "evolution." Personal responsibility is displaced by blind confidence in the new deity. Instead of supplicating a father-god

[8]Hutchinson, Paul, Sermon: "Incarnation," *The Christian Century*, December 22, 1928. Used by permission.

[9]Niebuhr, Reinhold. Sermon: "The Foolishness of Preaching," *Best Sermons* (1926), edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 184. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

we are to trust an abstraction, a theoretic process. Since all things change and all changes are for the better, guaranteed by evolution, then the more rapidly we change the sooner will we reach the millennial goal. Our foot is on the accelerator. We don't know where we're going, but we're on the way. The more we hurry the sooner we'll enjoy the thrill of discovery. The Japanese commits hara-kiri, the American commits hurry-scurry —both suicidal. The thing that is new is sacred and the experience of the race is to be discarded as soon as possible. There is danger of intellectual anarchy here, to be followed speedily by moral chaos. The sound mind is not seeking new things, but true things.[10]

The Church was ready to die when the zest had gone out. And the most alarming thing about these days in which we live is that a pall of cynicism seems to have settled down on this country after the fine glory of the zeal and enthusiasm which carried us through the war. We have lost our early love, and without it we die.

Men and women who profess the name of Christ are the salt of this weary, cynical, blasé post-war period in which we live. The phrases of selfish reaction are in the air. "Everybody is getting his, and I will get mine." Over many a life is written the sinister motto of the old Scotch House of Teviotdale, "thou shalt want ere I want." Internationally we bluntly said to the world through our official representative in the great Anglo-Saxon empire across the sea, "we fought for ourselves only; for ourselves, first, last, and always." We stand broadly in the councils of the nations as ready to participate far enough to care for our rights, but no farther.

[10]Guild, Lewis Thurber. *The Romance of Religion*, p. 165. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

Our mission is to recreate the zest for the unselfish ideals without which we would soon be on the road toward the doom of Prussia. Some of us may already have felt the breath of this enervating world weariness, and must find a more solid basis of happiness than any pursuit of pleasure can bring. The only permanent zest that life can give is in the will yielded to God and the body and mind dedicated to him. The biggest, best game ever played is before us. Let us play it for him. If we do this honestly, two things can be promised absolutely. For one thing, we shall find for ourselves permanent joy in living.[11]

Human life in its modern phase is every day under terrific and increasing pressure, both from without and from within, and nowhere more so than in our great cities. As our social order becomes more intricate and involved, it seems to gather weight and speed, until it often seems like a monster we have created but cannot control. It was hoped that with the advent of a day when one machine did the work of fifty men the burden would be lightened. Instead it has increased, and the man behind the machine is more anxious than ever; he must either master his machine or be crushed by it. Everywhere the tension tightens, alike for those bound to the wheel of toil and those who bow down to the great god Mammon. In every trade, business, and profession men have to go at a killing pace to do what is expected of them. Life is tense, and the question is not so much how to succeed, as how to succeed and keep the soul alive. It is a jumpy, jerky, jazzy age, cluttered and confused, its scene shifting swiftly like a spotlight,

[11]Wishart, Charles Frederick. *The God of the Unexpected*, p. 53.Used by permission of The College of Wooster Press.

in which we live in a hurrying day-by-dayness. No wonder the meaning of life is blurred in the scramble for the means of living, and the still small voice is drowned in the pell-mell medley of clattering events. The World War added new burdens of bereavement, of desolating disillusionment, of staggering debt and dismay. Men have lived a generation in ten years, and it is not strange that they are smitten with spiritual lassitude as well as physical fatigue. . . . Surely the pressure from without will be lightened in time by a wiser ordering of things, but from the inward pressure there is no hope of release. Inevitably, as man becomes more sympathetic, the vast misfortunes round about him—and those afar off, brought near by the drawing together of the world—weigh more heavily upon his heart. The keener his sensibilities, the more impossible he finds it to be happy while others are miserable. It is not a nemesis to destroy his peace; it is the pressure within him of the Spirit of God.[12]

Our day is very like that of Epicurus, who said: "The business of most men in my day is a madness, and their rest, a lethargy." But there are two kinds of stillness: there is the stillness of death, like that of a lowland marsh; and there is the stillness of life, like that of a mountain lake; and no man can complete his experience, no man can fully possess, or enjoy what God gives him so freely, who does not mature it in some sort of solitude, self-sought, and wisely used. That is the lesson of Paul's Arabia. We must not forget the fact that religion deals chiefly with the unseen world. The seen world, the world of business and of pleasure, the world of this too

[12]Newton, Joseph Fort. *God and the Golden Rule*, p. 150. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

solid flesh, is very potent; if we let it alone it will try to convince us that it is the only world of any importance. Only when we dispose ourselves to solitude, to quiet, to reflection upon the inner life, do we become conscious of another world around us—the world of spirit, of communion with God.

. . . . . .

It is, then, for this wise passivity I am pleading. I know I am speaking to many who need this. Some of you are business men, whose tasks are heavy and continuous; some nurses who lead the strenuous life; some young men struggling to get hold of a profession; all of us are subjected to major strains and demands, and if we yield to this there will never be any stillness left to us; never any possible knowledge of the higher environment of our lives; and never any insight into the latent capacities which would develop quickly, if we knew how to break the grip of action upon the mind. We cannot, of course, go away into the desert. No wilderness beckons us with generous hospitality; but in the quiet of our rooms, in the secret chambers of the heart; in the formation of a habit of reflection and quiet, we can find God near to life; and recover our balance and sanity even in the midst of our crowded world.[13]

Nowhere can the student come into closer contact with the deeper aspects of the life of his generation than by means of a study of the typical and significant homiletical literature of the period. Examples of this can be multiplied. The controversies, the struggles, and

[13]Kirk, Harris E. Sermon: "The Soul's Arabia," *The Southern Presbyterian Pulpit*, edited by Charles Haddon Nabers. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

the aspirations of the Puritan England of the seventeenth century are reflected in the sermons of men like Thomas Goodwin, Richard Baxter, and John Bunyan. If along with the works of these preachers we study the discourses of Jeremy Taylor with their cloying imagery, their luxuriant beauty, and their noble spirituality, and the vigorous, sinewy, epigrammatic preachments of Dr. Robert South, most militant of anti-Puritans, we have the whole thought-life of the century before us. No man stood nearer to the center of eighteenth-century England than did John Wesley. For more than half a century he traveled its highways and byways, touching its life at every angle. His sermons, therefore, inevitably interpret the trends of his age.

The same truth is illustrated many times in the history of the American pulpit. To study the sermons of John Cotton, the three Mathers—Richard, Increase, and Cotton—and those of Jonathan Edwards is to trace the development of American thought for four generations. The sermons of Lyman Beecher (1775–1863) are not the most seductive reading in existence, but they are the products of a live mind and a vital personality. It would be hard to think of any part of life which they ignore. And it would also be difficult to come nearer to the currents of early nineteenth-century life than we do in these bony discourses. The same can be said of the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher in their relation to the latter half of the same century. That sermonic literature mirrors forth the tendencies of the period which produces it, is a truth which has been illustrated in the history of generation after generation. Yet this does not necessarily mean that every sermon reflects the tendencies of the generation to which it is preached. There are a number of reasons why this is not true.

Some preachers are almost entirely untouched by the thought-life of their own period. Any churchgoer of mature years has been unusually fortunate if he has not heard at some time or other sermons of the vintage of the 'sixties or 'seventies. And he who in the present decade always escapes those of the eighteen-nineties has been exceptionally favored among the sons of men. Then, too, there are some sermons which on account of the nature of their material are not especially characterized by the spirit of the time. But, taking it all in all, a real sermon bears the hall marks of the intellectual and spiritual life of the decade which produces it. To this rule our own time is no exception.

As the student of present-day homiletical literature makes an effort to understand the attitude of the pulpit toward the currents of modern life, his first impression might be that the attitude of the preacher is one of profound and unmitigated pessimism. The man of the pulpit tells us that we are living in a period of "eating, drinking, and being merry," that our period is a time of "disillusionment," that we are the victims of "the tyranny of things," and that American life is characterized by "an essential paganism." Yet before we decide that the present-day preacher is essentially a prophet of gloom we need to do further thinking. It is always the function of the preacher to sound the tocsin of danger. In a world of the evanescent and the effervescent his task is to proclaim the eternal values. He is the pilot who must try to guide society past dangerous shoals and unseen rocks. Under these circumstances it is natural that the sermon should contain much about the despiritualizing forces which are making themselves felt in post-bellum America.

The pulpit of recent years has repeatedly emphasized

the thought that we live in a day dominated by material and pagan standards. During the past century invention has metamorphosed the world. The result has been new social groupings, different measures of value, and a deification of the tangible and the transient. Over a half century ago William Morris said, "We have become slaves of the monster to which invention has given birth." This tendency is not a new thing under the sun. Carlyle, Ruskin, and Matthew Arnold all descried it looming along the horizon of their own day, and each one of them lamented the subservience of man to the machine. Emerson in vigorous, sententious, but rather limping verse said: "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind." But as the years pass by and the world of machinery becomes more complex, man is less able to withstand it.

Anyone who has lived twenty years has seen an almost unbelievable increase in the number of comforts and luxuries at the command of the American people. To mention electric lighting, modern plumbing, central heating, vacuum cleaners, ice-manufacturing plants in the kitchen, radios, and automobiles is by no means to complete the list. In 1908 there was one motor car for every 1,788 people, and in 1920 one for every eight, and the estimated number in 1926 was one for every five. In 1900 there was one telephone for ninety people and in 1920 one for eight. Sixty per cent of the typical family income went for food and shelter in 1900 and in 1920 less than fifty per cent was spent in this way. It is said that a home containing all of the modern appliances would have a hundred different mechanisms. The grand total of the items sold is in the neighborhood of 365,000. These are by no means all impedimenta. None of us would like to go back to the days of our grandfathers.

But deep as our debt is to the products of the inventor, there are times when it looks as though the machine is subtracting from the vigor, the originality, and the idealism of the man.

On all sides life is encompassed by machinery. When Loyal Young, father of S. Hall Young, apostle to Alaska, left French Creek Community in Upshur County, West Virginia, over a hundred years ago to go to Cannonburg, Pennsylvania, to obtain a college education, he walked the entire distance with his shoes tied together by a string and dangling down from his shoulders. It is not uttering a word of soured pessimism to say that there are thousands of high-school boys and girls in our country to-day who would feel highly wronged to be expected to walk half a dozen blocks to school, a fact which is evidenced by the scores of cars parked in the vicinity of any high school in America. Every generation becomes more dependent upon things and consequently more thing-ridden.

Man, instead of owning his possessions, is often owned by them. A mechanized society inevitably becomes a materialized society. Measuring the values of life by a false standard tends to vitiate ideals. We pay lip service to the broad-based truth that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth, but pratically we go on the assumption that without an abundance of possessions all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

There is no doubt whatever that the American people have at present a higher standard of living than has hitherto ever been reached in the history of mankind. The total income of the people of the United States for 1926 was 43 per cent higher than it was in 1921. The income per person at that time was $1,637, and $2,210

in 1926. And according to the Bureau of International Revenue the average price of consumed goods was somewhat lower in 1926 than in 1921. But in the face of all this it is entirely probable that more families are finding it difficult to limit the size of the outgo to that of the income. Advertisements continually bombard the eye in an effort to arouse new desires. Henry Thoreau's gospel of lessening the denominator of a life by mastering the art of doing without has with each year fewer and fewer devotees. It is hard to tell the average American that "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone." The result is the development of a race of

> Prisoners in this world
> Of coins and wines and motor horns; this world
> Of figures and of men who trust in facts;
> This pitiable hypocritic world
> Where men with blinkered eyes and hobbled feet
> Grope down a narrow gorge and call it life.[14]

This love of luxury and departure from life's simplicities tends to make us creatures of time forgetful of eternity. In a society of this type the heroic virtues which made the Puritans men of iron are not likely to be particularly in evidence. A society shot through with an idolatry of possession and a love of easy living tends to produce a somnolent, unheroic church which is satisfied to mumble over old formulas and face life in a lackadaisical, easy-going fashion. When Jesus called his disciples his criterion of selection was: "If any man would be my disciple let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The call of Christ has never been

[14]Hagedorn, Herman. *The March of Youth.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

to the easy life. And in so far as the modern church is denaturing the heroic appeal of an undiluted, militant, sacrificial Christianity, to that degree it is compromising with twentieth-century paganism.

Closely related to this is a spirit of revolt against law which now characterizes American life. The most conspicuous manifestation of this is the alarming increase in violations of the laws of the state and the nation. This, however, is but one expression of the rebellion against law of every kind. In art, music, poetry, and social life standards which have been taken for granted for generations have been nonchalantly thrown into the limbo of discarded antiques. It is easier to note the presence of this condition than it is to discover the reasons for it. When we try to find the causes for this revolt against rules and principles we are at first inclined to attribute it to the chaos which naturally follows a great world cataclysm. And it must be admitted that the war has not been without its influence upon the ideals of men. While it was yet in progress some of America's outstanding students of history declared that the world had changed more between 1912 and 1915 than it had done during the preceding three hundred years. This may be an extreme statement, but when we look back ten, fifteen, or twenty years, it is not hard for us to see that the wheels of life have been moving at a tremendous rate. Nineteen-ten impresses us as being away back in the dim distance. We have without a doubt, in this general upheaval of civilizations, rid ourselves of some empty conventionalities and false standards. Yet it is by no means impossible that at the same time we have lost our grip upon some of life's essentials.

Professor Coe in his wise little book, *What Ails Our*

Youth?, takes the unchallengeable position that there is nothing wrong with our youth which is not wrong with the rest of us. Following this idea somewhat further he traces the alarming tendencies, which no honest and competent observer can help seeing, back to the spirit of thoughtlessness, licentiousness, and materialism which exists in the environment in which the young people of to-day must live and develop.

We are now and then told that the "new license" is due to a revolt against "Victorian prudishness" or "old-fashioned Puritanism." Our grandparents back in the days of good Queen Victoria were not perfect. Perfection of any sort is rather scarce among the children of the offending Adam. Emerson laconically observes "There is a crack in everything God has made." The Victorians fell far short of perfection. Their world has been improved upon in many ways. But an age of mighty achievement in science, in industry, in literature, and in practical idealism is not to be dismissed with a few simpering giggles. As wise and well-balanced a modern-minded man as Dean Inge has characterized the period in which Queen Victoria reigned as "the most wonderful century in human history." Much more could be attained by cultivating a few Victorian virtues than by sneering at the real or fancied limitations of the age.

The same supercilious cynicism which has made the word "Victorian" a term of opprobrium would regard calling a man a "Puritan" as the basest of calumnies. Many times when the man of to-day thinks at all of the Puritan, he remembers his bell-crowned hat, his stern visage, his cold and cheerless meeting house, his two-hour prayers, and his three-hour sermons. Somehow or other it seems hard to remember that no greater contribution has been made to American life than that

made by the men and women belonging to the world-shaking movement known as Puritanism. There are keen-thinking, clear-visioned students of modern life who believe that there is nothing which America needs more in this third decade of the twentieth century than a rebaptism of Puritanism. At the beginning of his eloquent tribute to the Puritan in his essay on Milton, Macaulay says: "The Puritans were men whose minds derived a peculiar caste from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests." The sons and daughters of any generation who allow the pressure of a world of material interests to crowd all thoughts of the eternal from their lives are sacrificing their noblest heritage.

This note of warning, instruction, and illumination is heard frequently from the enlightened pulpit. It is especially well stated in a sermon entitled "Our Changing Morals" by Ralph W. Sockman.[15] Dr. Sockman begins his discourse by discussing the modern spirit of rebellion, especially in its anti-victorian manifestations. The ideals and standards of that period once reverenced almost abjectly are now held up for ridicule. The great careers of the period have been psychoanalyzed and ruthlessly dragged through the mire. Carlyle's prophetic rage was due to an undiscovered ulcer in the pit of the stomach. Tennyson has become "Miss Alfred," a milk-and-water versifier, and Gladstone a glorified ward politician. The period itself is looked upon by the ultra-modern as the epitome of stodginess, dullness, and hypocrisy. This anti-Victorian spirit in its extreme form has demanded in life and letters a repeal of reticence, de-

[15]Sockman, Ralph W. *Suburbs of Christianity*, p. 86. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

cency, and even chastity. It is a symptom of chaotic thinking and an ethical drifting, but it is to some extent due to the fact that in the past and in the present there has been a great gulf fixed between professions and action, between creed and life. At its worst the ethical rebellion is shallow posing combined with a disgusting animalism. At its best it represents a hunger for sincerity.

The age of Jesus, like our own age, was a time of a lack of moral certainty. The so-called religious leaders of the day were forgetters of the weightier matters of the law. Hence there was a rebellion against all moral standards. Jesus met the situation by teaching them "as one having authority." American Protestantism needs a note of authority. To-day we respect the authority of the scientist and the literary critic but in morals and religion we are satisfied with anarchy. The Bible is an authority, but it demands no superstitious idolatry. It points to the Man of Nazareth and asks us to use "its method in the laboratory of experience and find out the truth ourselves." Jesus is an authority in the realm of morals, but he is no dogmatist. He tells us to follow the right as conscience gives us, to know the right, use conscience as the tool, obedience as the method, and experience as the laboratory. With his principles before us the Church need not speak in wavering tones as to what is right and what wrong.

Preaching of this type has two merits: It interprets the trend of the times and it also makes a personal appeal. One of the outstanding duties of the preacher is to set forth the spiritual significance of the various developments of life and thought. There are many themes which can be treated in such a way as to accomplish this end.[16] Bishop Charles D. Williams in his *The*

[16]cf. Especially chapters I, II, VII, XI, XII.

Prophetic Ministry for To-day, Lyman Beecher Lectures for 1921, has a lecture entitled "The Gospel for an Age of Disillusionment."[17] That we have been passing through such a period is a truth which cannot be gainsaid. During the war hope seemed to be upon the mountain. Humanity was thrilling with a fervid passion of high idealism. The world was being made over. A war to end war was being fought. "The parliament of man, the federation of the world," long looked upon as the poet's fantasy, was becoming an actuality. Religious leaders girded themselves for new opportunities. The men who had been facing a hell as horrible as that depicted by the great poet of the Middle Ages would come marching home hungry for spiritual food. Instead we have had panic, fear, unreason, lust for pleasure, and "hard-boiled" reaction. In the typical American community the work of the kingdom has met with less of a response than at any other period in our national life. Youth, at least on the surface, is trivial, blasé, and unsponsive to the call of spiritual adventure. Men and women of middle years have lost their inherited ideals and have built up no new convictions. A period like this demands the plain facing of indubitable facts. Dr. Frederick Lynch in a sermon entitled "Have We Lost the Power to Venture?"[18] asks the question as to whether or not we have lost the power to launch into the deep, to try the unknown, and face the great adventures of the explorer of new and untried worlds. Dr. Lynch answers his questions in the negative. Our generation is satisfied with smug contentedness, stupid respectability, and the safety of the crowd. He has

[17]Williams, Charles D. *The Prophetic Ministry for To-day*, p. 157. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

[18]*Best Sermons*, Book 4, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 81.

found this to be characteristic of our colleges. Here where the spirit of venture should naturally find its home there is dull conformity, undeviating standardization, and a terror of the new. In the Church there is something of the same conforming spirit. If twentieth-century Christendom were to "proclaim the new gospel of love the enemy, goodwill, forgiveness and redemption of other people as the only mission of a nation" and affirm "that the time has come to have genuine faith in the teachings of Jesus and apply them to the solving of all the problems of mankind" the weary world would put war into the limbo of unholy things. Nations, also, have lost the power of venture. No longer do they dare the impossible and believe that God is faithful to his promises. Gone is the crusading spirit, forgetfulness of self, and the aspiration to climb to new heights of promise. Depressing as is such a characterization of our national life, it is a truth which needs to be spoken. Man is naturally an optimist. He turns the face of the gloomy picture to the wall. Before he admits that all is not well he must be struck hard by the disagreeable fact. For this reason it has always been the function of the prophet to point out the clouds lowering along the horizon. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest of the Hebrew prophets were no gentle-voiced speakers of honeyed words. The preacher of to-day who dares to say that all is not well is loyal to his prophetic tradition. Even if sometimes he uses a disproportionate amount of darker coloring as he paints his picture he thus makes the semi-blind professional optimist see that which he would otherwise ignore. The preacher of our generation has no greater task than that of upholding the spiritual verities in a day of cynical disillusionment.

IV

MODERN PREACHING AND THE CHURCH

THEN the work of the Church is to make men like Christ, to build Christian character in those whom it has brought to Christ. If the noblest character is found in the Church, the Church is making good; if the finest, truest character is found outside the Church, then the Church is a failure. If men outside are better husbands, better fathers, better citizens; if they are the most humble, pure, unselfish, and highest in ideals, the Church is not making good. It is to be judged like anything else, by its products. We ask no charity in forming our judgments. What are the facts? Of course, there are unworthy men in the Church and they are pointed out and noted because they are the exception. The Church cannot select its membership as a lodge or social organization does. The worst of men and women, knocking at its doors, confessing wrong-doing, professing acceptance of Christ as their Savior, and declaring their purpose to follow him as Lord and Master, are always admitted. After all, the business of the Church is to make bad men good and good men better. It is not a mutual admiration society, but a group of people who are not yet wholly good, but who are striving to be so. Why not judge the Church by its best and not by its worst? A friend sent me a basket of apples last autumn. Some of them were spotted. Should I have refused all, therefore? We put the few spotted ones aside, and used the good

ones, and had delicious apple pie every day for two weeks.[1]

This strange but high weekly pilgrimage you make to God's tabernacles is basic for all the highest you are and hope to be. It is lovely chiefly because of the Supreme Presence there. And for those of you who have entered most deeply and genuinely into this experience of seeking his presence, it has done several things. I would like merely in the briefest fashion to suggest three or four. It has been, first of all, a spiritual cleansing. With all sorts of lower and less worthy ideals and conventions does a man come into contact through his daily association with the world. He needs the washing that comes to him here each Sabbath from the consciousness of God's presence. In proportion to the earnestness and genuineness of his seeking, out from this presence he goes a finer man, a finer man through the years, bathed and perfumed. . . . To how many a spiritual pilgrim seeking God in his sanctuary has it been like that. The man has gone there with a sorely burdened heart pursued by disappointment and sorrow and anxiety or by temptation and sin and remorse. And then something has happened there; some word has been spoken or read; some hymn has been sung; some thought has come to him unbidden, and, it may be, not even mediated by any human lips, direct from God. And lo! It has been as the opening of a concealed door. He has gone in and been safe. For he has crept "under the shadow of the Almighty." And if it is a place of safety for you, it is that for your children. All creatures

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[1]Shelton, George W. Sermon: "Is the Church Making Good?" *Christian Work*, September 27, 1924. Used by permission.

capable of a real parenthood seek a safe place "Where they may lay their young." Your children have got to meet sorrow and temptation. They are especially exposed to it because of their plasticity and inexperience. There is no possible way by which you can save them from that. The only thing you can do is to form in them the habit of going to the tabernacles of God. You can thus beat a way for them to the sheltering presence of the Lord of Hosts. Then, for those who truly enter into the House of God, it is a place of strength and inspiration for the battle of life. "They go from strength to strength."[2]

We have been told in trenchant magazine articles, written by ministers who were old enough to have known better, that if the pastors of the churches had not been "so benignly dumb"—I am quoting here from an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*—"So hopelessly inefficient," the Kingdom of God might have been coming with power and great glory. We are informed that millions of the choicest young men in the land are almost beside themselves "in their eagerness to embrace Christianity," but for some subtle reason, known only to the adept, "they are bristling with hostility" toward the one organization which for nineteen centuries has done more than all other organizations put together to make that Christianity a power in the thought and action of the world. It is all somewhat puzzling to the plain man who walks with his eyes on the stars and his feet on the solid earth.

When I read these slashing criticisms in glowing

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[2]Vander Meulen, J. M. Sermon: "The House of God," *Best Sermons, 1926*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

magazine articles I always wonder where the essayists have been. My own personal observation of the Church in this country has been neither brief nor narrow. I am fifty-nine years old, and I have attended church all my life. I was born in Virginia, grew up and went to college in Iowa, received my theological training in Boston, held three pastorates covering twenty-two years in Ohio, Massachusetts, and California, and for the last eleven years I have been living in Connecticut. And in all that time I have never heard, nor heard of, a minister preaching "a long evening sermon against the evil of drinking sweet cider," or threatening people with the wrath of God because they wanted to hear Edwin Booth in "Hamlet," or "causing nine-year-old boys to suffer tragic torment because they thought they had committed the unpardonable sin and so were lost." If these faults which the magazine articles allege against the Church were common and characteristic, surely I would have bumped against them sometime, somewhere.[3]

Babson has not dug deeply enough. Let me now give my six reasons why the business man does not go to church, without arguing them:

1. Because he lacks the moral courage to set himself to the lifting of the lowered moral tone of his day.
2. Because the extravagances of the present age require him to give his major time and thought to money-making.
3. Because he places sensuous (I do not say "sensual") pleasures above spiritual privileges.

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[3]Brown, Charles R. *The Honor of the Church*, p. 3. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

4. Because he has never seriously given the Church its proper rating as a vital factor in civilization.

5. Because he undervalues his influence over his neighbor.

6. Because he has lost the sense of God.[4]

In our day millions of men have trained and fought and suffered with men who pronounced different denominational shibboleths and professed different creeds. These men have learned to look upon one another with a new understanding and a new respect. They have discovered that the religious beliefs which unite men are far more significant and far more necessary than are the religious beliefs which separate men. For instance, what really matters under shell fire is not whether one has been baptized by sprinkling or by immersion, but whether one believes that at the heart of things there is decency and justice, and that if one gives his life for some good cause he will not have died in vain.[5]

The Church in history has not always been as swift as it should have been in matters of reform and better conditions, but in spite of some failures to be true to its mission—as Jesus desired it should be—the Church has been the starting-place for human betterment. Either the organization, or the men and women taught and nurtured in it, have had a great place in the emancipation of woman, the freeing of the slave, the elimination of the curse of drink, and numberless other reforms. Let us hope it will now take the lead in a crusade against

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[4]Snape, John. "Babson's Six Reasons Why Business Men Do Not Go to Church," *Homiletic Review*, March, 1928. Used by permission.

[5]Tittle, Ernest F. *What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?*, p. 35. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

war. The recent action of the Federal Council in planning to put on a speaking campaign for the abolition of war is an instance of the place of the Church in civilization using its power and influence for human betterment. If the sum total that the Church has done for human happiness and justice could be added up as the years have grown into centuries, it would entitle it to be called without question "A Glorious Church!"[6]

What if I ventured to do what Paul did in this congregation at Ephesus? Were I to walk down these aisles and ask you, one by one, Do you believe in Jesus Christ, and have you been baptized into this faith, and have you a saving faith in him as your Redeemer? you would, I believe, with perfect unanimity and with all sincerity and honesty reply, "I do." But were I to walk down these aisles and ask you as did Paul in the Church at Ephesus, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? what answer would be made? How many persons, suppose you, are there who have accepted Jesus Christ in this positive way? They have believed in him historically. They do not question that he lived, wrought, died, and rose again at a certain time and in a certain place in a certain fairly well-defined way. They believe in him doctrinally, perhaps they are personally very orthodox in their beliefs. For the most part they have inherited these beliefs in him from their ancestors. For the most part they have no experimental beliefs. What beliefs they have are second-hand beliefs, such as have been handed down to them by those who have been their instructors. They have grown up in a certain kind of Christian environment, and they have been taught in

[6]Sheldon, Charles M. Sermon: "A Glorious Church," *The Christian Herald*, December 17, 1927. Used by permission.

the Christian Church, and they have a sort of a negative belief in him, a kind of belief that awakens no enthusiasm and no personal devotion, but a belief which they believe is sufficient for their salvation. They are preeminently orthodox and perhaps quite correct in their belief, but they know little or nothing of the power of the Spirit of God in their daily lives.[7]

This is Memorial Sunday. To-day our thought goes naturally back to brave men who have laid down their lives for the country, to men, especially, who two generations ago fell in the Civil War, and perhaps, above all, to Lincoln, whose sacrifice is typical of the rest. I have always wanted a church that Abraham Lincoln could have joined. He never joined the Christian Church. One feels that that is a pity. He was one of the finest fruits of Christian civilization.

No, surely you cannot fit Jesus into the idea of an exclusive church where people are kept out on nonspiritual grounds. He will not stay there. You cannot make him any sectarian thing under heaven. And this is the reason: He always was thinking about the one who had been left out. You get ninety-nine sheep all safe in the fold and everybody else perfectly satisfied, only he is not satisfied. He said himself he could not keep his mind at home from the one who had been left out. He did not want anybody left out. He lamented it when he left himself out. He wanted everybody included. As for the men and women we are thinking of to-day, typified by Lincoln, who try to love the Lord their God with all their heart and their neighbor as themselves, who crave spiritual fellowship, who want to work and

[7]Randolph, Herbert F. Sermon: "The Birthday of the Church," *Homiletic Review*, May, 1928. Used by permission.

worship with people to whom God is real and Christ is Savior and the Bible is dear and prayer is precious and immortality is meaningful, you cannot imagine Jesus letting them stay outside. He would not have rested until he had them inside. How our littleness misrepresents Jesus! Sometimes I think I hear him saying to us as long ago in the upper room he said to one of his disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip?"[9]

As to social questions, the Church holds the ideas of the mass of persons busy with the affairs of life, too busy to do much studying on their own account. Let but the Church once see the moral bearings of a social process and it takes the appropriate moral attitude. The most serious count against the Church is its slowness on social questions, but even here the Church moves faster than any other large social organization, and much faster than she herself used to move. Think of the quickness with which the Church is opposing itself to the reactionary elements established in power by the Great War. There is no doubt that the Church lost its bearings in the war. It certainly should have kept the ideals higher and should have made itself felt at the Peace Conference. Even so, the Church is recovering. The situation is better than at the close of the Civil War. Search through church papers from 1866 to 1876 and see if you can find anything which approaches the alertness of social spirit which marks many a church utterance to-day. As for the Church's being the mouthpiece of financial interests, that simply is not true. The churches which contain the largest proportion of wealthy members have

[9]Fosdick, Harry E. Sermon: "The Inclusive Church," preached May 31, 1925. Used by permission.

spoken out most fearlessly on the dangers of wealth.

The churches are so broken up into separate and warring sects! How can they claim a divine authority? "Warring" is too strong a word, and they do not differ on the all-essential emphasis on the good life. They can come together; let us hope they will do so soon, but not so soon as to overlook the importance of diversity and variety of the expression of the Christian life. It is as important that the richness and effulgence of Christian life be set forth in manifold variety as that we attain to one great organization. When the organization comes, it should come with provision for the liberty of minorities to speak out the newer revelations that have come to them, or that they think have come to them. We need new emphasis on the value of the "remnant" in the Christian community.

No—the Church as an organization is not infallible, nor perfect, nor even ideal. The proper aim, however, is not the building of a church as an organization but the creation of a Christian community. The ends-in-themselves are the Christian lives. All else is instrumental—its worth to be judged by its fitness for the end in view. If we can get away from all types of abstract infallibilities and think of the concrete task of building actual lives up into spiritual strength, we can see abundant means at hand for that purpose. The question is as to whether the Church can do what is expected of her. Many who accept the Christian ideal doubt the ability of the Church to put the ideal into effect. There is no fate—no inherent evil—which blocks such realization. The very imperfection of the organization is a challenge to the free souls who belong to the organization.[8]

[8]McConnell, Francis J. *Is God Limited?*, p. 190. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

The Church cannot fulfill its mission if it must depend upon slackers and slockers, on renegades and runaways. There are some members who are counted but who do not count. They are bystanders, but do not stand by. Probably no institution in the world has such a large proportion of elements in it which fail to function as has the Church. Somehow the large body of its membership has never been fully utilized. The Church needs a great laymen's movement which will bring about a new loyalty and love for Christ and his Kingdom.[10]

The universal essential of a Christian is not sacrifice, but preparedness for sacrifice. A Christian girl must be prepared to forego marriage, if the wedding bond would interfere with her Christlike course. A youth must be prepared to lose his position rather than to compromise his conscience. A business man must be ready to endure loss rather than be dishonest. The follower of Christ must be willing to die for him rather than to disown him.

We are far back from the frontiers and front-line trenches of our faith. We do not have to fight our way to our religious beliefs at the risk of our physical life, or even of our social standing. The scars of persecution are not an inevitable consequence of Christian living to-day. We can be just as good Christians in our sheltered New York as were the heroic souls who fought in the arena of Rome at the behest of Nero—*provided we are willing to pay such a price if need be.*

If the apostolic churchmen were to return to some of our modern, upholstered, anæsthetized churches, they would feel like an oak tree in a hothouse. And they by

[10]Schaffer, Charles E. Sermon: "Can the Church Survive?" *The Reformed Church Pulpit*, edited by Frederick K. Stamm, p. 140.

their sacrificial spirit would make some of us churchmen dumb with shame. We have been trying to make Christianity too easy. We have lost sight of the rugged realism of the cross. The result is, wheresoever we have done so, we have a seedless religion—individual lives with a formal piety, but no fruits of the spirit; churches with expensive equipment but no spiritual harvest.[11]

We have in the Christian Church many inquiries and some movements concerning church unity. Such desires with all their haltings, limitations, bonds, and prejudices are still worth consideration and effort. But here we must be careful not to lose the true place of emphasis. It is so easy to slide from the spirit to the letter, the spiritual to the material. The unity for which Jesus prayed was not that which can be condensed into the experience and expression of a fraction of the Church. It is not an agreement about a few ideas, or conformity in some common order. It must begin with a catholic spirit which can appreciate all feelings after God, sympathize with all experiences created by the spirit, and be at home among all the manifold and various expressions of gratitude and ascriptions to God. It must feel the inspiration which moves like the tide of the sea, rising above all the levels of our petty divisions and isolations and baptizing us in one spirit into one spiritual body of Christ. It must begin in this catholic worship where all stand equal in the love of God, and where all, from the least to the greatest, know God and worship him in spirit and in truth.[12]

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[11]Sockman, Ralph W. Sermon: "The Church of the Easy Chair," *The Christian Herald*, November 12, 1927.

[12]Woelfkin, Cornelius. *Expanding Horizons*, p. 157. Used by permission of The Cokesbury Press.

The Church entered the ancient world of hatred and suspicion, of bondage and oppression, and created a people of God. Wise philosophers like Seneca were deeply conscious of a misery that they could not alleviate and of a tyranny that they could not escape. But Christians trusted each other, and rose above all earthly bondage through absolute devotion to a crucified and risen Christ. Because they knew that God was on their side, they did not fear the face of man; and because they felt themselves to be the undeserving objects of infinite love, they became tender and compassionate toward all men, especially to the ignorant and those that were out of the way. . . . The same message that regenerated a dying civilization and subdued the barbarous hordes that swept down upon it from the north is going out through all the earth to-day, and it is the only power that can unify human life and bring peace to a world of strife and war. The Church alone is cultivating a quality of love strong enough to counteract the natural antipathies of the human heart and unite all nations, races, and factions in a human brotherhood under Jesus Christ as Lord.[13]

What the Church is always in danger of forgetting is that her kingdom is not of "this world." The kingdom which Christ has appointed to us is such as we have already considered; it is the empire of the ideals and laws of the gospel; its motives are the motives of the gospel and its weapons the weapons of the gospel and the cross. And we are always needing to be reminded of this and to take constant care that the world which we

[13]Rowe, Gilbert T. Sermon: "The Christian Brotherhood," *The Southern Methodist Pulpit*, edited by J. M. Rowland, p. 17. Used by permission of The Cokesbury Press.

are commissioned to overcome does not in turn overcome us. . . . Here has been, and is still, the most subtle temptation of the Church. Conscious of an imperial mandate, conscious of the right and need to possess the whole human order and weary, maybe, of the long, long fight, the Church is being constantly tempted to win the world by adopting the ideals of the world and by using its weapons. And she cannot do it. . . . The Saints of Rome and Ephesus and Philippi did not need to be reminded that their kingdom was not of this world. The world which faced and perplexed them there was distinct in every section of its alignment from the whole body of their spiritual interest. They had no part with it, nor it with them. But such a condition could not endure through the very necessities of social life—nay, it could not endure through the mandate of the Church itself. So the two orders have met and mingled as they must. The Church shares the strain and solicitation of both the world and the kingdom until to-day there is no more difficult Christian task than a noble otherworldliness, and the saints have immense need to be reminded that though a kingdom is appointed unto them, their kingdom is not of "this world."[14]

It goes without saying that the pulpit does not neglect discussing the Church and its problems. The preacher is the voice of the Church. He defends it against the onslaughts of its critics. He endeavors to lead it into richer fields of usefulness. He explains to dim-visioned Christians its larger significance and its nobler possibilities.

I. Sometimes even the unfriendly critic is a source of benefit. He is "the sting which bids not sit nor stand

[14]Atkins, Gaius Glenn. *The Undiscovered Country*, p. 186. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

but go." If captious criticism is a disguised blessing the Church of our day is highly fortunate. Possibly never in the whole history of things ecclesiastical has organized religion been subject to such a fire of ruthless denunciation. This is especially true of those who modestly term themselves the "intelligentsia." In such circles the Christian Church is looked upon as the obsolescent relic of a darkened age. The ultra-modern *littérateur* sometimes attacks the Church. More frequently he ignores it. Yet a literature rather formidable in size has emanated from this source. Whatever its quality the pulpit cannot afford to pass over it in silence.

Much of it does not bear the test of close study. It has every indication of coming from the pen of a writer whose first-hand contact with matters ecclesiastical has been superficial and fragmentary. As a rule the blatant denouncer of the Church has had no contact with modern thought. He looks upon every preacher as a fossilized bigot and takes for granted that his theology is that of the early part of the nineteenth century. Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* is a crude performance coming from the pen of one whose study of the Church has been brief and external. *Up from Methodism* by one Herbert Asbury is sensation-mongering work from the pen of an essentially illiterate man. The personal narratives in this book are so palpably overdrawn that one cannot tell where truth leaves off and fiction, masquerading as truth, begins. It has been suggested that such material is beneath the attention of the pulpit and that the preacher humiliates himself and the Church by answering it, but, on the other hand, shallowness and error can do considerable damage before they fall down by their own weight.

Yet there are criticisms which at least indicate more

thinking than these effusions of limelight-seeking journalists. It is now and then charged that the Church is the vassal of the present economic order and that it has no especial authority to speak in regard to spiritual matters. Occasionally the public is regaled by extracts from some of the seamy chapters in church history disseminated as evidence of an intrinsic hypocrisy. Others contend that the ministry is a class apart from the pitfalls and struggles of everyday life and that the Church is an incubus rather than a help to society.

Possibly the best way to answer critics, both intelligent and otherwise, is to set forth constructively the truth for which the Church stands and the work which it accomplishes. If we can judge by printed sermons and church announcements, this is now and then done, but it is by no means certain that there is as much educational material of this type disseminated from the pulpit as there should be. Of course, the preacher mostly talks to those who would agree with him as to the place of the Church in society, but it is worth while for the members of a congregation to be well-grounded in the reasons for their loyalty to the Church. Moreover, the pulpit is often a sounding board through which a man speaks to a larger audience than the one which faces him from the pews. And in these days of general broadcasting it is possible that instruction as to the value of our religious organizations will at last reach some of the people who need it most. The education of the American people in regard to the place of the Church in our national life is one of the most fundamental and rewarding tasks of the Christian pulpit.

II. But the Church needs criticism from within. Its limitations and handicaps must be frankly recognized. Without an honest facing of problems there can be no

real effectiveness. An exceptionally comprehensive analysis of the situation which the twentieth-century church is compelled to face is found in a sermon on "Can the Church Survive?" preached by Dr. Charles E. Schaffer, General Secretary of the Home Mission Board of the Reformed Church.[15] The preacher in this case begins his discourse by admitting that there are certain symptoms which do not give grounds for optimism. These he divides into two groups. (1) External Symptoms. Among these are the relative apathy and lukewarmness of enrolled church members, the decay of rural churches and of once flourishing city churches, and the substitution of other agencies and activities in fields where the church once reigned supreme. (2) The Inner Situation. Dr. Schaffer regards this as much more serious and he mentions the following factors against which the modern church must contend: (*a*) the scientific spirit (*b*) the mechanistic philosophy, (*c*) the new psychology, (*d*) the logic of Protestantism, which has never militated for the development of any spirit of reverence for the church as such, (*e*) the tendency to regard the church as an end in itself rather than as a means to the Christianizing of all areas of life. (3) The third section of the sermon is a plea for a positive, constructive program which will make the Church a more vital factor in broader fields of living. Dr. Schaffer groups the various phases of this richer program under the following heads: (*a*) a reappraisal of the mission of the Church (*b*) a restatement of its message, (*c*) the rejuvenation of its ministry, (*d*) the reconsecration of its membership, (*e*) the reorganization of its machinery, (*f*) the restoration of its might and majesty.

[15] *The Reformed Church Pulpit*, edited by Frederick K. Stamm, p. 131. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

A study of these needs and remedies cannot but convince the thoughtful Christian that the Church of to-day is called upon to grapple with mighty problems. No progress is ever made by simply going through motions. The efficacy of an organization cannot be judged by externals. Reports of increasing membership and a big budget are not sure signs of the growth of the kingdom. Community life cannot be Christianized by means of statistics. The first responsibility devolving upon any church is to Christianize its own membership. Uniting with a church must be less of a passive acquiescense and more of an enlistment for service. The world will never be evangelized by slackers. The Church is the representative of the kingdom of God. It must cover the whole range of human activity. The effectiveness of any church is ultimately to be judged by the moral and spiritual condition of the community in which it is located. No matter how prosperous a religious organization is externally, if the standards of the community in which it is located are low in morals, business, and society that church is not functioning. Dr. George A. Gordon once said: "American religion is war against evil to the knife and knife to the hilt." Against animalism, ostentation, selfishness, greed, brutality, and exploitation of man by man, the Church must stand with adamantine firmness. A real church is considerably more than a club for furnishing a soothing and harmless social life to a larger or smaller group of congenial souls. These are not easy days for the forces of Christianity. No longer do people go to church because it is the thing to do. In many places for most of the year the evening service is impossible, and even at the morning hour in large churches preachers of light and leading preach to serried rows of empty seats dotted with a scant few hearers. But the fact that

the task is difficult is in itself evidence that there is work to be done.

During the whole history of the Christian religion the work of the kingdom has been impeded by the tendency of men to battle over non-essentials. The first sermon which Dr. Fosdick preached as minister of the Park Avenue Baptist Church was a plea for "The Inclusive Church, a church that Abraham Lincoln would have joined." When Lincoln was asked why he did not join church he gave this reason: "I have never united myself to any church because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith. When any church will inscribe over its altars, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior's condensed statement of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul." Dr. Fosdick's position is that this should be the basis for admission to the Christian church, which should emphasize above all things fellowship with the Master and learning how to live.

III. In comparing the sermonic literature of to-day with that of ten years ago, it is noticeable that there is marked increase in the number of sermons dealing with various aspects of worship. This tendency is also evidenced in the increasing number of non-sermonic books dealing with the same theme. In 1926 for the first time in the history of the lectureship, established in 1871, the subject of the Lyman Beecher Lectures was worship, the subject selected by the lecturer, Dr. J. R. P. Sclater being "The Public Worship of God." A little earlier,

Dean Willard L. Sperry, of the Harvard Divinity School, published a volume entitled *Reality and Worship*, much of which had been previously given as lectures at several theological seminaries. Alongside of these publications can be placed a number of volumes containing prayers and other material of service in sincere worship. Some Christians are helped by a ritualistic service and for others the less ritual the better. Robert Browning in "Christmas Eve" found the spirit in the pomp and ceremony of St. Peter's and in the sordid ugliness of Mt. Zion Chapel. But whether our ideal service is where the worshipper can hear

> the pealing organ blow
> To the full-voiced choir below
> In Service high and anthems clear

or whether with Whittier we can say that we love

> the silent reverence
> Where my brethren gather, slow and calm,

worship satisfies a genuine hunger of our souls. "As the hart panteth after the water brook so longs the soul of man for the living God." There is that implanted within our souls which impels us to seek the throne of God. Dr. Cabot in his book, *What Men Live By*, in enumerating the essentials of life gives us the following list: "Work, Play, Love, and Worship." Worship is such an important phase of the spirituality of man that it should be given a large place in Christian thought.

Protestantism, with the best intention, has made the unfortunate error of minimizing worship. Ever since the days of "good Queen Bess" the English people have had a fear of what they call "popery." This is, for two

reasons, entirely to be expected. First, the Englishman has always instinctively rebelled against Continental domination and reacted strongly against the idea of the Vatican having anything to say about affairs in England. Secondly, the reign of Elizabeth was preceded by that of her sister Mary, a bigoted Romanist, who tried to make England Catholic by ruthless persecution. This anti-Roman tradition has seeped into American life to such an extent that the main article in the creed of some who regard themselves as Christians is to hate the Catholic Church and all of its ways. This blind revulsion has extended even to the simplest of rituals. As a result many American Protestant churches have paid no attention to the technique of worship and have been satisfied with a tawdry, slipshod, hugger-mugger type of service. But within recent years enlightened Christianity has made a special effort to improve in this regard. This realization of the value of worship is responsible for the emphasis which the pulpit is now placing upon worship.

In a sermon bearing the caption "The House of God" Dr. J. M. Vander Meulen, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, makes a plea for a place for social worship in the life of the modern American. His text is Psalm lxxxiv:1. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"[16] He gives three reasons for the loveliness of the tabernacles of the Lord: (1) Their great superiority to anything else in the world. They appeal as no other institution does to the best in man, to reverence, worship, obedience, and faith. (2) They furnish the highest of fellowships. Here all men are children of a common father; distinctions of occupa-

[16] *Best Sermons, 1926,* edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 189. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

tion, race, and class are obliterated. Here men are brought face to face with sin, with repentance, with God and his Kingdom. (3) They are lovely because of a special sense of the Supreme Presence. They are God's tabernacles, the place where the omnipotent, omniscient one reigns. To enter into the House of the Lord is to receive strength and inspiration for the battle of life.

In this sermon as well as in other discourses the ethical implications of worship are not neglected. Dr. Theodore Soares, of the University of Chicago, in a sermon preached in old King's Chapel in Boston, takes the position that a marked value of worship is spiritual insight.[17] Possibly the key to the address is in the following stanza from Matthew Arnold:

> We cannot kindle when we will
> The fire that in the heart resides,
> The spirit bloweth and is still,
> In mystery the soul abides,
> But tasks in hours of insight willed
> May be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

The object of worship is to give one of these "hours of insight," to give to man a vision of the higher meanings of life. If this result were attained it would bring to man "a sense of the greatness of duty, the glory of justice, the blessedness of brotherhood, and the wonder of the experience of fellowship." It does not do this, however, because we do not really worship. We go through perfunctory forms in a perfunctory manner, and, moreover, we fail to carry our worship over into daily life. As a result our lives are not characterized by those qualities which are the fruitage of sincere and complete worship.

[17] *Weekday Sermons in King's Chapel*, edited by Harold E. B. Speight, p. 103. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

The thought of all of the ethical influences clustering around worship enables one to realize clearly the possibilities of its discussion in the pulpit.

IV. Church unity is a subject which has been discussed in the pulpit by many preachers. Although a number of good sermons have been preached upon this theme, it has frequently been bandied about in discourses which were a woeful waste of time and energy and good intentions. Some ardent devotees of church unity have based all of their arguments upon the assumption that those of other denominations should be magnanimous enough to advance the cause of unified Christianity by stepping over the fence into their own particular circle. Unfortunate examples have now and then been presented of enthusiastic teachers of religious unity who have not displayed ordinary human courtesy to members of other groups. Some debates intended to forward ecclesiastical brotherhood have been pitiable quibbling matches which would have made a logic-chopping medieval schoolman turn green with envy. But this does not detract from the respect and honor which American Christendom should have for the tolerant, sacrificing, brave-spirited protagonists of better understanding between denominations. Church unity should be discussed in the pulpit for the purpose of teaching Christian people the lessons of Christian brotherhood, and the right type of seed sowing in this field will some day result in a harvest.

Recent years have brought both discouragements and encouragements. The failure of the Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches to unite has been a grievous disappointment to hopeful Christians. But the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches in Canada

has set the clock of ecclesiastical unity forward at least two decades. The Conference at Lausanne, although not especially rich in tangible results, has produced a better understanding and a more Christian spirit. Yet after all the most encouraging aspects of the questions are exemplified in the willingness of denominations to coöperate and forget traditional antipathies. Petty denominationalisms grow less with every year. The World War blasted many a boulder of prejudice into atoms. A Methodist chaplain tells of how in a camp in France while serving the soldiers he was assisted by a Roman Catholic and a Jew. Contacts in the time of upheaval and tragedy bred a new knowledge and a new respect. But one does not have to cross the ocean to see the breaking down of the walls of denominational bigotry. In every community the coöperation between the churches becomes closer with each passing year. The crude, provincial denominationalist is an anachronism. Much of this progress has been due to the enlightening influence of a preaching which has tried to teach the church-going public that Christianity is more than denominationalism and that ecclesiastical controversies between those of different households of faith impede the Church in the performance of its God-given work of transforming and Christianizing the world.

V

THE BIBLE IN THE SERMON OF TO-DAY

THIS heading of the first chapter of the Book of Isaiah strikes the keynote of the whole book. If you will turn to the second chapter of the book, you will find the heading substantially the same as that of the first chapter—"The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." After the second chapter this heading disappears, but the content of all the chapters from the beginning until Chapter XIII is concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Those are Isaiah's two great themes. He never can get away from them. He thinks habitually of religion in civic and national terms. When you come to the thirteenth chapter, you observe that his vision widens, he now begins to see things concerning nations round about him. He has revelations concerning Babylon and Egypt and Ethiopia and Arabia and Moab and Damascus and Tyre. He sees things concerning all the nations around Judah, and all the foreign capitals within sight of Jerusalem. This man is an internationalist. He believes God is a God of cities as well as a God of individuals. He believes that God plans cities, builds cities, watches cities, sympathizes with cities, makes use of them in carrying out his eternal plans. Isaiah believes that God is interested in nations, that he plans them, waters them, trains them, desiring that they may bring forth blossoms which shall exhale the fragrance of heaven. It is his purpose that

nations shall produce fruit which shall feed and refresh the human heart. "Every man's life is a plan of God," so said Horace Bushnell over fifty years ago. Every city's life is a plan of God, so thought Isaiah 2,600 years ago.[1]

Suddenly, the speaker paused. There was a tightening of suspense, a heightening of dramatic quality. The speaker's hand shot out, and his voice cried, "For three transgressions of Israel, yea for four, will I not turn away the punishment thereof." Turn back from your neighbors and look at yourselves in the sight of God. What have you been? What have you done? Incisively, in few words, he sets out those social wrongs that "sin against the strength of youth"—shameless debauchery, hard-hearted injustice, oppression of the poor and helpless. How stinging and vivid is the language: "Ye that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor." He sets forth all their petty cruelties and irreverences. They make their sleep comfortable on clothing taken as security from the poor, knowing that the law of God commands the return of such garments before nightfall. They use the wine paid in as an offering at the shrines to help on their shameless revelings. Yet God has tenderly cared for them, displaced other races to give them their favored home, sent messengers to tell them of his truth and his law. But they have rejected the messengers, silenced them, debauched them.

So, for all these sins, swift and terrible punishment will come. The threat is all the more sinister and terrifying for being left vague. Something will come upon them that will press them down, as the sheaves are pressed

[1]Jefferson, Charles E. *Cardinal Ideas of Isaiah*, p. 41. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

tight in a cart. No one can escape. No strength, or swiftness, or audacity, or adroitness, can deliver in that day. God has judged. God has spoken. Let them heed the word! So, we infer, ended the first speech of Amos in Bethel.[2]

My purpose is to discuss the Book of the Prophet Jonah. I will show you it is neither a stumbling-block to the believer nor a triumph to the incredulous. It is frivolous only to the frivolous. It is wise to the wise. It is a great book, wonderful in its generation, and for all ages an expression of religion's loftiest thought and deepest faith.

It is a notable parable to those who consider it a parable. Many still behold in the narrative the climax of the supernatural, a severe but salutary test of holy credulity. Others treasure the spirit, but ruthlessly disregard the painful literalness of outgrown orthodoxy. They suffer sometimes for this a mild survival of persecution. And though in the Synagogue no such letter worship has ever been exacted, still to remove confusion of ideas, it seems well to apply to this venerable record the accepted principles of criticism, to measure its value, and extract its essential truths.

Now, this little book is to be viewed precisely from the same standpoint as other Biblical books. The Bible is history, teaching by example. Or it is poetry, inspiring to ideals through the emotions. Or, at times, it contains a parable, charged with the deepest meanings, fraught with the weightiest spiritual messages. The actors there are human, their methods are natural, their aspirations are not dead to-day. The prophets, above all, were

[2]Merrill, William Pierson. *Prophets of the Dawn*, p. 50. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

mighty reformers, aglow with a passion for right and justice. And Jonah, the faint-hearted, did not, like Cassandra, speak ever to deaf ears, but turned a heathen multitude back to penitence and safety.[3]

The Prophet Elijah was in a bad jam and the situation looked dark. A weak man was on the throne and a strong woman behind it. The weak man feared him, the strong woman hated him. Thus both had the best—or worst—of motives for getting rid of an object of common antipathy.

The father of Ahab, the weak king, was Omri, a pretender who seized the throne of Israel by force. The record says that he "did worse than all who were before him"—and they were a bad lot. Ahab was worse than Omri. He was a brave soldier but a vacillating ruler, a pliant instrument in the hands of the strong queen. Most of Ahab's trouble was due to his wife. Jezebel was the daughter of the King of Phœnicia, and the great-aunt of Dido, the founder of Carthage celebrated by Virgil. She and her family belonged to the old race of the Canaanites, whom the children of Israel had dispossessed of the land and with whom all affinity was strictly forbidden.

Jezebel came as a bride to Samaria determined not only to set up the worship of Baal in her own private chapel but to force it on the entire nation. She was one of those ferocious, indomitable, and vindictive incarnations in female form who when elevated to power leave a terrible scar on the history of nations. What the Empress Irene was to Constantinople, what Catherine

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[3]Harrison, Leon. Sermon: "The Prophet Jonah," *Best Sermons, 1926*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 57. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

de'Medici was to France, Jezebel was, and more, to Israel. Ahab can hardly be held accountable for marrying her—that was all arranged by the parents of the couple before the groom was old enough to have anything to say about the important question of who should be his wife. Where he made his mistake was in giving her *carte blanche* to misrule in his name. His time and thought were absorbed in strengthening the national defenses and building and ornamenting palaces, and in these occupations he neglected the principal duty of a theocratic monarch, which was to preserve the purity of the national religion. The rites of the Phœnician deity which Jezebel was determined to instate in the place of Jehovah were unspeakably obscene, cruel, and inhuman. Ahab participated in the worship and service of Baal, though not to the total exclusion of the God of Israel. He kept open the line of communication with the prophets of Jehovah in case it should be expedient to retreat. Ahab always had an eye to the main chance.[4]

It is worth while also to emphasize the literary character of the Bible, because it brings into the Bible so much of variety and therefore of interest. If you have sixty-six different friends, you value them because of their distinct individualities. You admire this man for courage and that one for his dogged determination. You honor this woman for her fine sincerity of spirit and that one for her ability to forgive injury. This man ministers to your life by his love of poetry and this other one by his irrepressible sense of humor. How terrible it would be to have sixty-six friends all alike—have them answer your questions in the same words and greet your story

[4]Prince, Leon C. *Pharaoh's Question*, p. 31. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

with the same identical smile! When we understand the literary nature of the Bible its sixty-six different books become so many different friends ministering to us, each with its own message and fitted to meet different moods and times.[5]

When Jesus said it was a narrow gate and a straitened way that led to life, he did not intend us to take narrow and broad as synonymous with virtuous and vicious. What he meant was that the realization of life is an affair of self-control. If the river of life is to keep on flowing and not to be lost in desert sands, it must flow within banks. A certain self-imposed narrowness is essential to the strength of life. There is a principle of economy, of parsimony, at the very heart of life. The game of life has its rules; and to ignore the rules is to miss life itself. I am not now speaking only of moral self-control, but of a self-control which has to be exercised even in the face of things in themselves good. You can spread the butter out so thin that you cannot taste it; and you can spread life out so thin that you cease to realize it. You sometimes hear it said of an author that he has written himself out; and his work has become thin, insipid, insignificant. He has written too much. It does not at all follow that because a man is very busy he is getting much done; it may indeed mean that he is getting very little done. He would probably do more if only he would do less. He has so many irons in the fire that he has no time to attend to the fire; and the fire is apt to go out. And the fire is life itself. Life must have its channels, its boundary lines; and we lose it if we do not limit it. We must needs draw lines around it, and

[5]Palmer, Albert W. *The New Christian Epic*, p. 91. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

respect the lines we draw, if we are to taste its fine and gladdening vintage. It is like a rare old wine that is turned into ditch water when it is diluted.[6]

We are sure that Paul was genuine. This is the first thing we are sure of. We may question his wisdom, and mistrust his judgment, and be skeptical as to the correctness of his opinions, and suspect his fairness to opponents, and lack confidence in his processes of reasoning, but we cannot doubt his sincerity. He comes so close to us in his letters that on a point like this we cannot be mistaken. In a formal treatise on history or science or theology, a man can hide himself behind his subject, but in a friendly letter, the whole man comes inevitably to the front. When one is writing to a friend on a subject of vital importance to them both, one cannot play the rôle of a deceiver. That is contrary to nature. When a teacher is writing to his pupils about things they have learned or ought still to learn, he cannot say one thing and mean something else. That contradicts human nature as we know it. Paul's letters are so straightforward, so unstudied, and so spontaneous, that his actual self stands out revealed. His letters ring true. One cannot sit down and read them through and come away feeling he has been reading the pious meditations of a rogue. Honesty has a note which even the father of lies cannot counterfeit.[7]

The Bible is for many people a lost book. Some have loaned the book, probably to their mothers, and have

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[6]Roberts, Richard. *The Gospel at Corinth*, p. 136. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

[7]Jefferson, Charles E. *The Character of Paul*, p. 59. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

never taken the trouble to get it back. "Our mother's Bible" is a real tragedy. Some have lost it in church. They think of it as so safe there that no one need worry about it; you always know where it is, if ever you really need it. It gets lost in the familiar. One of my members objects to my reading the New Testament translation by Professor Goodspeed. He says he can understand it so well that it loses its sacredness. So can the Bible get lost in the mists of age.[9]

There are two points of view from which to look at this story of the Gadarene demoniac—one a critical, the other a sympathetic standpoint. The account of the demons going into the swine has furnished critics with a great deal of hostile argument against the authenticity of the story, as also against the morality of the proceeding. I am not going to discuss it from this angle, however, save only to remark that the healing of the man was worth all that it cost. Men do not hesitate to pay a large price for some material gain; we are quite willing to spend our all that through medical attention our loved ones may be made whole; then why so much criticism of the loss of a herd of swine that an immortal spirit should have been freed from the curse that rested upon it? It was a small price to pay for so great a deliverance.

Rather, however, would I speak of the sympathetic aspect of the story; and from this point of view it gets quickly hold of our hearts. I never read the story without a deep feeling of pity for this man. At first the story appears remote from our life; we seem to have no part in it: but think about it, put yourself in the man's place,

[9]Gage, Carl D. Sermon: "The Lost Bible." Used by permission of the author.

and gradually we find that it is describing something of our own stresses and strains. The story touches our life simply because the man is a type of one who has lost control of himself; he is the prey of morbid passions and delusions; he is miserably unhappy and restless; and an offense to all his neighbors.

When Jesus asked his name he said Legion, for we are many. The poor fellow felt that he was several men; he did not know which one, but was pulled here and pulled there by uncontrollable impulses, a danger to himself and to society. The powerful passions within the man made him abnormally strong, for he could not be bound. He would break every thong bound to him. Neither was he susceptible to advice or moral suasion. The hand of everyone was against him; little children fled at his approach; the remnant of sanity within the mind only made him acutely aware of how unplaced he was, and so he fled to the tombs on the outskirts of the village, and there through long vigils of the night would moan, and cry out his pitiful case to the stars. He could not control himself, yet he felt the shame of it. He could not restrain his impulses, yet knew the evil of it; and so wandered helpless, a danger to himself and a curse to society.[9]

First then, "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the councils of the ungodly." The righteous man will not take the advice of sinners. He will not accept the council of men who do not know the existence of God or do not obey the rules God gives. Jesus calls men who do such things "blind leaders of the blind." He who goes to a blind man for guidance should not expect any

[9]Kirk, Harris E. Sermon: "Christ's Patience with Our Impatience," *The Christian Herald*, September 1, 1928. Used by permission.

advice save that which a blind man can give. The righteous man, the wise man, will understand this, and he will not walk in the council of the ungodly.

Secondly, the wise man, the righteous man, will not travel the road that sinners walk. He will not adopt for himself the ways, customs, or principles of those who, conscious or unconscious of God's being, disobey his commands. We should guard carefully against associations with men who do not express in their lives the high principles which we hope to express in our life. The man who hopes to study stars cannot spend his time looking at the ground. We will not look for the righteous in a company of knaves. Culture breeds culture, and he who has high ambitions will not lose them by fellowship with the unworthy. The Christian, if he is wise, will be found with Christian people. Happy is he, and blessed, who is not found in the place where sinners are.

Thirdly, the Psalmist does not look for the righteous among scoffers. The virtuous will not allow his own pride to be intolerant of creeds or wishes of others. He will not be impatient at their ignorance or unkind to their feelings. If earthly riches allow him to enjoy comforts which are denied those more unfortunate, he will not scorn the less fortunate brother. Blessed is the man who does not join company with scoffers; to do so is not only discourteous, it is also unchristian.

It is significant that every passage throughout this book of songs which is occupied with rebuke or threats against the wicked is directed against these three: those who seek the advice of ungodly men, those who associate with such, and the scoffers.[10]

[10]Fitch, F. J. Sermon: "Life's Crown or Cross," *Homiletic Review*, August, 1928. Used by permission.

Let the peace of Christ rule (margin "arbitrate") in your hearts.—Colossians iii:15.

The Colossians, to whom this letter was written, were exposed to certain perils, against which this communication was designed to put them on guard. They were, as yet, perils of a mental rather than of a moral order—perils of doctrine rather than of practice. We say "as yet" because the relation between thought and conduct, between doctrine and practice, is so close and logical that it becomes merely a question of time as to when creed shall emerge into character, and belief translate itself into life. The danger in the case of this church was twofold. First that of a reversion to a Judaistic type of religious life, fettered by all kinds of ceremonial limitation and prescription; and, secondly, that of a certain theosophical tendency which threatened to displace Christ by substituting disembodied spirits or angelic agency as a medium of communication between man and the unseen order. Like the modern theosophical cult with which we are more or less familiar, this, too, had come from India; and, mingling with the Christian faith, was threatening to neutralize its central truths. Whatever may have been the exact form of this ancient error, we gather from the apostle's method of its treatment that it constituted a serious menace to the supremacy of Christ in the system of Colossian thought. Hence the line of argument as to the preëminence of Christ's person and work, in which his supremacy is declared to be absolute and unshared.[11]

All Christians believe that a divine light shines from the Scriptures. But the light we look for may be for

[11]Howard, Henry. *Fast Hold on Faith*, p. 103. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

either of two uses: outlook, or insight. If we go to the Bible seeking outlook upon mere facts otherwise ascertainable through diligent research, we are doomed, to a certain degree at least, of disappointment. For, though the Bible is doubtless more often right than not in its statements of fact, it is not by any means always so. The materially minded Christian turns to the Scriptures as to a final authority upon certain chapters of history and certain aspects of science. When men investigate these chapters and these aspects through other sources independently of the Bible, they discover that many Biblical statements cannot be verified, while some are irreconcilably contradicted by the conclusions of dispassionate and exact investigation. Now a Christian who holds as an indispensable element of faith that the Scriptures are inerrant in all statements of fact, must, if he would keep his faith, deliberately reject the verdict of his senses in order to cling to the outlook which the Bible affords him upon these controverted matters. So he will come to believe that the dispassionate investigator is a godless man, with an animus against religion; he will refuse to familiarize himself with the results of such investigation lest his mind be tainted by this appalling impiety; and he will cling with sullen, truth-defying stubbornness to the more extreme forms of the theology of the sixteenth century, even more distant from the spirit of Jesus in the first century than from the findings of science in the nineteenth and twentieth. With such an outlook, a man can hardly live at peace with his more candid neighbors, but in the name of the Prince of Peace will inevitably find himself obliged to engage in endless embittered controversies. And I have known Christians of this sort whose minds were so twisted by accommodation to their irrational position

that they were guilty of actual dishonesty and falsehood in argument, willfully misstating known truths and misquoting their adversaries in lamentably mistaken championship of the God of Truth.[12]

The Bible has become a book of such extraordinary significance for several reasons. In the first place, it presents, not, indeed, the only, but surely the most comprehensive vision of God and the deepest insight into the will and purpose of God that may be found anywhere: God, Spirit, Person, with a clearly defined moral character, in his fatherly mercy ready to enter into covenant relations with men, loving man and desiring to be loved by him, his anger aroused by sin, but gracious toward the repenting sinner. Moreover, because he is such a God he yearns for a state of society in which human relationships will be a reflection of his own character. Again, the Bible reveals remarkably keen insight into human nature. The Bible has been called the "family album of the Holy God." We might liken it rather to a picture gallery. What a variety! Everywhere we see them, flesh and blood. Why is it that they so impress us? Is it not because the pictures are so true to human nature that in spite of the difference in time, place, and circumstances they serve even us as mirrors?[13]

Without intelligent understanding of the Bible no one can do clear and correct thinking about the Christian religion. As Christianity is a religion of a book, the Bible has, of necessity, always loomed large in the work

[12]Stafford, Russell Henry. *Christian Humanism*, p. 93. Used by permission of Willett, Clark and Colby.

[13]Eiselen, Frederick Carl. Address: "The Use of the Bible To-day," *Christianity To-day*, edited by Harris Franklin Rall, p. 53. Used by permission of The Cokesbury Press.

of the preacher. An adequate knowledge of the Old and New Testaments is a basic requirement for effective work in the pulpit. But to know the Bible is not easy. It is not a simple volume but a library of different books, which have been produced centuries apart and represent various degrees of civilization, enlightenment, and spirituality. It has been delved into by students of nineteen centuries and of varied degrees of equipment. It is true that it is a stream in which "lambs can wade and elephants can swim." Learned and unlearned alike can obtain from its pages help which will enable them to face more bravely the slings and arrows of life. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Bible unlocks its treasures to the person without sufficient intellectual training to do the scholarly work necessary to obtain them. There is no royal road to Biblical knowledge. No supernatural power will give historic or literary knowledge to a man who does not possess the necessary degree of scholarship. But these facts have not always been faced. The Bible has suffered more from the erroneous interpretations of bunglers than any other piece of writing in existence. False explanations have been handed down across the years. Passage after passage has been wrested from its context and twisted to mean something as far from its correct thought as the East is from the West. This being the case, the task of giving to the public a sane, correct, ethical interpretation devolves upon the ministry. The Sunday school, the week-day school of religious education, and the college department of Biblical literature may all do their part, but the membership of the American churches will not attain intelligence in regard to the Bible unless the teaching ministry of the pulpit is tactful, pedagogical, honest, and spiritual.

Whether or not the preachers of America have been sufficiently active and effective in the teaching of the truth about the Bible is a question admitting of several answers. Yet no one can accuse the American pulpit of ignoring the sacred writings. Constant use is being made of them in many ways. For example, except in very unusual cases, every sermon is preached from a text. Sometimes, however, the basing of a sermon on a Biblical passage does not tell the congregation very much about the Bible. Frequently the text is nothing more than a sententious sentence which gives the preacher a starting place or furnishes him with a topic for his discourse. In other instances the whole sermon consists of an exposition of the passage selected as a text. Sometimes this exposition consists of educing certain truths of life from the thought of the selected words. Other times it is an elucidation of the exact meaning of the words. Neither of these methods, though, necessarily sheds much light on the Bible. A person can quibble over texts year after year without ever coming within a thousand miles of their real meaning. There is, both in the pulpit and out of it, a place for textual study, but a study of the minutiæ of the text without any attention to the larger aspects of the material will give no one an adequate knowledge of the Bible.

There are certain principles which cannot be violated in the study of any piece of literature in existence. If they are not applied to a given work its meaning and significance will not be understood. The books of the Bible, in this regard, are no exception to the rest of the world's literature. If the laws which are utilized in interpreting Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe are ignored in the study of the Bible, its truths will remain hidden. This brings us face to face with the question:

"What are those laws?" It is not necessary for us here to summarize all of the canons of literary criticism as the question can be answered by the mention of a few of the essentials which must be kept in mind in the endeavor to find out what any author has to say. No passage of the Bible or any other literary masterpiece can be thoroughly understood without the reader knowing who wrote it, to whom it was written, and under what circumstances it was written.

To illustrate, suppose that the text of a sermon is "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. vi:19–20.) As everybody knows that Paul wrote these words to the people of Corinth there is no problem here in regard to the authorship or those to whom it was addressed. But the complete meaning of this text cannot be grasped by one not familiar with its background. In writing to the Christians in Corinth, Paul was communicating with people with whom he had come into direct contact. About three years before he wrote the epistle which to-day we know as I Corinthians, Paul had spent several years in Corinth. During the time that had passed since the great apostle had left the ancient Grecian city, the little band of Christians there had been traveling a rough road. Doctrinal disputes had arisen. The Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians had not been able to see eye to eye. Some contended that a Gentile could not become a Christian without becoming to all intents and purposes a Jew and adhering to all of the requirements of the Jewish ceremonialism as outlined in the so-called Mosaic ritual. Paul has considerable to say

about this problem in I Corinthians, but in dealing with verses 19 and 20 of Chapter vi these semi-theological controversies are of little importance.

Seeking for the background of this text we must consider another phase of the situation in Corinth. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city. Upon its streets were to be found Roman soldiers, Greek philosophers, Jewish merchants, swarthy-skinned Arabs, and fair-haired barbarians from northern lands. And the racial confusion was no greater than the chaos in the realm of religion and ethics. The old order had passed but the new day had not dawned. No longer did the enlightened Grecian world fear the gods whom their fathers had believed to inhabit the fastnesses of Mount Olympus. The people of Corinth at this time, like those of the rest of Greece, were without religious sanctions for any moral standards. As a result the Corinthian Christians were surrounded by an environment which was, according to Canon Farrar, saturated with dishonesty, debauchery, and drunkenness. The same writer refers to Corinth as "the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire."

The Christians at Corinth had not been able to get rid all at once of the accumulated habits of years. Neither were they unsusceptible to the contaminating influences of their environment. Especially after Paul had left, many of them became entangled in the meshes of temptation. It was hard for them to walk the right road confused as they were in regard to doctrine and ethics. They had so frequently heard good called evil and evil, good, that they did not know right from wrong. Living in a city regarded as "the most licentious of all that are and have ever been" their standards of sexual morality became low. Paul, in a brief letter now lost, wrote to them about this. Then they wrote an evasive,

self-exculpatory letter to him. I Corinthians is a reply to this document. The epistle deals with many matters and contains much doctrinal discussion. But when Paul told the Corinthians that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit he was exhorting them to so reverence their bodies and to abstain from the licentious living which surrounded them. Such an exposition does not impede the practical application of the sermon. In fact, it can be managed in such a way that some of the alert minds in the congregation early in the discussion will begin to make some comparisons between the ethical confusion of the days of Paul with that existing in twentieth-century America. And to hear now and then this type of preaching is to gain the basis of an education in regard to Biblical facts and their meaning.

There is a unanimity as to the predominant importance of a ministry of teaching and few would gainsay a statement to the effect that the teaching of the truth about the Bible is an important part of the work of the preacher. But a study of thousands of contemporary homiletical addresses cannot help producing the impression that the modern pulpit is not laying any especial stress on this phase of the function of a preacher. True it is one does not have to search long in order to find some good reasons for this. A story is told of a speaker at Northfield asking Moody as to the advisability of mentioning the fact of the "second Isaiah" and receiving the reply: "What's the use of bothering about that? Most of them don't even know there was one." Certain types of Biblical discussion are better adapted to the classroom than the pulpit. On the other hand, however, the possibilities of effective teaching of the Bible from the pulpit are almost unlimited.

The Old Testament is rich in homiletical values. Side

by side with a perennial human interest is a spirituality deeper than did ever plummet sound. But these older Scriptures are not without difficulties for the truth-seeker. Their roots are deep down in the years. They represent different periods of cultural history and different conceptions of righteousness. They are the history of the spiritual growth of a people. There is a vast gulf fixed between the song of Deborah and the noblest words of Isaiah. Many a devout-minded Christian has passed through deep waters of doubt and gloom because a few of the general truths of Biblical scholarship have never been explained to him.

Dr. Lyman Abbott in 1901 published a volume entitled *Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews*. This volume is the result of a series of Sunday-evening addresses. Little attempt is made to draw ethical truths from the material, the idea being to set forth for the congregation the findings of the Old Testament scholarship of the period. Two other books produced at the time of "the turn of the century" and both products of the Lyman Beecher Lectureship are highly suggestive in this field. One is *The Social Message of the Modern Pulpit* by Dean Charles R. Brown. The idea of these lectures was to combine Biblical exposition and the application of the principles of the Gospel to social conditions, a method which can be utilized with high effectiveness in the making of sermons. The other volume is *Modern Criticism and the Old Testament* by George Adam Smith. This work is also rich in suggestions for the homiletical use of the Old Testament.

Excellent as has been the material presented to religious leaders through such lectureships and in volumes more strictly academic, the pulpit in general has made relatively little use of the results of the Biblical scholar-

ship of the last half century. This is evidenced not only by the study of volumes of sermons, pulpit announcements, and newspaper reports, but also by the haziness, confusion, and ignorance which more often than not characterizes well-meaning and, in many respects, intelligent men who have attended church for years. These conclusively prove that neither the sermon nor any other educative factor has been successful in teaching the American people what they should know about the Bible. Some of the pitiable controversies which have impeded the work of the kingdom during recent years would never have taken place had the essential facts of Biblical scholarship been pedagogically presented to the active membership of the American churches.

Of course, this has not been entirely neglected. Charles E. Jefferson published in 1903 a book bearing the title *Things Fundamental*, containing, along with eleven other discourses, two sermons dealing with the problems which the preceding half century had brought to the thoughtful, Bible-studying Christian. A study of the homiletical literature of the past twenty-five years shows a sprinkling of addresses in this field. They are, nevertheless, decidedly few and far between. There are, however, some notable exceptions. Dr. Jefferson's book, *The Character of Paul* (1923), is confessedly a volume of sermons, although they were never preached on account of the inability of the author to utilize in the pulpit all of the sermons that his mind created. *Cardinal Ideas of Isaiah* by the same author is a book of studies bearing all of the hall marks of being prepared for the pulpit. Another illuminating piece of work of this type is *Prophets of the Dawn* by William P. Merrill, a volume consisting of pulpit addresses on Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. An especially interesting and significant

volume of sermons in the field of Biblical exposition is *Paul at Corinth* by Richard Roberts. In these discourses history, biography, and theology do not intrude themselves but they are all there. In addition some of the volumes dealing with the teachings of Jesus can be included in any list of books of Biblical preaching.[14]

In *The New Christian Epic*[15] Albert W. Palmer has a sermon entitled "Is the Bible Complete?" in which a number of scholastic problems are elucidated. The thesis of the discourse is that the Bible is the record of the growing religious insight of a peculiarly gifted people, that, as a record, it is characterized by progress and development, that it is to be studied honestly and demands no special privileges or immunities, that its authority is the authority of the truth it contains, and that the proof of its inspiration is its continued power to inspire the souls of those who love and understand it. Dr. Palmer emphasizes the fact that the Bible is a book containing many kinds of great literature. In order to bring out the great diversity of the content of the Bible, he suggests that if Chaucer, Shakespeare, Green's *History of England*, Blackstone *On the Common Law*, *The Idylls of the King*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Phillips Brooks' Sermons, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, the Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, a Life of Lincoln, and a hymn book were all bound together we would have for English literature something comparable in scope and variety to the Bible. He also demonstrates the truth, with which any real student of the Bible should be familiar, that this varied literature is of varied spiritual value. It is a long distance from the sacrifice of Jephthah's

[14]Cf. Chapter II.

[15]Palmer, Albert W. *The New Christian Epic*, p. 85. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

daughter to the noble sixth chapter of Micah, from the practical wisdom of Proverbs or the artistic pessimism of Ecclesiastes to the Sermon on the Mount. But this unevenness of value need give the reverent student no trouble. The Bible contains "its own standard and touchstone." The moral elevation of any passage in the Bible can be measured by the degree of its accord with the teachings. Such a criterion is worth more than dozens of verbalistic quibbles. Each man makes his own Bible. A Bible unread is a Bible unpossessed. By our increasing knowledge and our love we can with every passing year make it mean more to us. For us it should always be a growing Bible.

But there is one other phase of preaching about the Bible which deserves consideration here. Some of the best teaching which comes from the pulpit is found in expositions introducing sermons. For example, in a sermon "The Things That Are Excellent,"[16] by Miles H. Krumbine, the text is "that ye may approve the things that are excellent." Philippians 1:10. Most palpably the direct approach to this text would be a study of the circumstances under which Paul wrote it. Paul at this time is a prisoner in Rome. His hope of ever being freed from his bond is slight. Nero is emperor and the chances are negligible of his ever having any sympathy for a man like Paul. Soon Paul must stand before this flippant, maudlin, blood-lustful degenerate. The letter to the Philippians has the "dew of death" upon it. The church at Philippi was Paul's first congregation in Europe. This letter, unlike the one to the Corinthians, is not concerned with theological or ethical controversies.

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[16]Krumbine, Miles H. Sermon: "Things That Are Excellent," *Best Sermons, 1925*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 79. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company.

It is a personal note, affectionate, artless, and intimate. Its keynote is "Rejoice." Paul feels that the future for the Philippians is certain if they "can keep alive the faculty of discrimination and discernment; if they can continue to appreciate and undertake the excellent." This type of exposition at the beginning of a sermon can be productive of a larger knowledge and a firmer grasp of Biblical truth.

The much unilluminated vaporizing which has characterized the theological controversies of the last few years is in itself a challenge to the pulpit. Not only must the preacher know the Bible, he must teach the Bible. During the last half century the field of Biblical scholarship has become immeasurably richer. The Bible is better taught both in college and in seminary than it has ever been before. Yet this broader and deeper knowledge is as yet confined to a limited group. Its treasures will never be widely disseminated without their being utilized by the teaching ministry of the pulpit. There was a time when the Scriptures were withheld from the rank and file of the people. Later they were chained to the reading desk. To-day they comprise the most widely circulated book in existence. But for many the Bible is an unread book. The pulpit must help those who grope in darkness to master the truths of the Bible in such a way as to make it a real lamp unto their feet and a light upon their pathway.

VI

THE PULPIT AND SOCIAL BETTERMENT

If a man takes himself as a grasshopper he is likely to act like a grasshopper. That is the way these hankerers after Egypt probably acted, squatting down in terror on the ground and hopping like insects from the shelter of one bush to another. When a man is squatting close to the ground, any man standing up on his two feet looks to the squatter like a giant. What a spectacle it is—the advance agents of the chosen people of God, the descendants of Abraham, the forefathers of the Christ, the called to world destiny—sneaking around on their hands and knees in the grass and calling the Canaanites giants!

It was all very ridiculous but not one whit more ridiculous than the present-day pessimism which admits that Christian principles applied to society, to government, to industry would lead to a land of milk and honey but which wails in distress at the idea of doing anything now. Let us trust to the slow processes of education; let us see if we cannot breed giants of our own in the wilderness; let us see if we cannot starve one Canaanite giant at a time into surrender. At some periods in social advance such advice is wise—but at other periods the call should be for immediate advance. Some massive improvements in the political, social, industrial realms could be seized at once if a given generation would listen to Caleb and Joshua.[1]

[1]McConnell, Francis J. Sermon: "Giants and Grasshoppers," *Best Sermons, 1925*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 76. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

The supreme business of the human race is the creation of new men. We are always forgetting this. We crave new inventions, new discoveries, new methods, new programs, new machinery, but we do not cry out day and night for new men. We want a better school; we cannot get it until we get the new teacher and the new pupil. We want a better press; we cannot get it until we get the new journalist. We want a better church; it will not come except through the new preacher and the new layman. We want a better government; it is forever beyond us until we have the new mayor, the new governor, and the new President, the new aldermen, and the new legislators, and the new judges, and the new voters. We want a better industrial order, and the only way to get it is by rearing a new race of employers and employees. We want a new home. That cannot be without the coming of the new husband and wife and children. We want a higher civilization and talk learnedly and eloquently about it, but we cannot have a higher civilization until we have a higher type of man. At every point we are driven back to the inexorable demand for new men. All other new things are easily obtainable. It is easy to pass new laws, create new machines, adopt new devices, put into operation new methods, but these new things do not give us a better world because the world is made by personality, and only through new personality can the world rise to higher levels.[2]

The standards by which a man deals commercially test his religion and prove finally its reality and worth. Emerson said:

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[2]Jefferson, Charles E. Sermon: "New Men and New Years," *Christian Work*, December 26, 1925. Used by permission.

Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed hath lent.

What we affirm by our words is far less convincing than what we declare by our deeds. The latter cannot be hidden, and finally the community renders its verdict concerning us according to our daily dealing with others. Honest work and accurate sales cannot be discounted; their testimony stands out with convincing power.[3]

The Church should not sit idly by while leaders of idealism are struggling against commercial greed for the protection of little children. We should be concerned, not with set schemes of economic procedure or industrial life, but in bringing to the man who toils the sense of human brotherhood. When one reads the bitter criticism of the Church which comes even from conservative labor leaders like Mr. Warren S. Stone, he is impelled perhaps not so much to indignation as to self-examination. Why should there be a rift between the Church and labor? Not, I am sure, because we have failed to solve the problem of industrial inequalities, but because, rightly or wrongly, many toilers believe *that we do not care*. It is the sense of brotherhood which he craves.

The Church dare not live a sheltered life. She dare not allow men to apply to her those words of Ruskin in his "Sesame and Lilies": "With her happy smile upon her face and no cloud upon her brow, because there is a little wall around her place of peace; and yet she knows, in her heart, if she would only look for its knowledge, that outside of that little moss-covered wall,

[3]Davis, Ozora S. *Preaching the Social Gospel*, p. 152. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

the wild grass, to the horizon, is torn up by the agony of men, and beat level by the drift of their life blood."

One of the most heart-rending scenes in all literature is that in which King Lear, out in the night and the storm, maddened by the ingratitude of his loved ones, bids the boy go into the hovel, and says, "I'll pray, and then I'll sleep." And what an immortal prayer Shakespeare has put on his lips! No longer thinking of himself! For the first time tasting poverty, storms, and rough usage, his heart goes out in sympathy for all who suffer.

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just."

May God grant that, without committing ourselves to definite schemes of social or industrial reorganization, we may catch from this old prophet a new sense of brotherhood and sympathy for the common man.[4]

So with the matter of weights. It is an aid to piety to do away with the suspicions and misgivings of the market place. We are not in a mood for Bible study or prayer if, at the close of the day, we have a haunting surmise that the scales of the affable, smiling dealer who took our money for goods during the day were "off." It was a long step ahead in the Christianization

[4]Wishart, Charles F. Sermon: "Love the Solution of the World Crisis,' *Christian Work*, June 7, 1924. Used by permission.

of the world when the doctrine got firmly into the common consciousness that nobody must be swindled in the market place, that there ought to be two gainers at every trade, that each man ought to leave the scales with his mind satisfied, each having received just measure by the transaction. The day of Christianity through the conversion of the heathen has been so long in coming, because while the message of the missionary has been all right, the scales of the trader—and of the nations back of the traders—have been all wrong. In the early days of trading with the Indians in New York, the Indians would put their heaps of furs in one pan of the scales. In the other pan was a Dutchman's hand, or a Dutchman's foot. The Dutchman's hand never weighed more than one pound, and the Dutchman's foot never weighed more than two pounds. The commercial methods of so-called forward nations in dealing with so-called backward nations have not always been as crude as the Dutchman's, but they have often been more false and more deadly.[5]

It is not wrong to make much bread. There is nothing holy either in poverty or wealth, and nothing pleasing to God in starvation. Abraham and Job were not cursed of God by his gift of great possessions. Neither the tramp nor the idle rich are favorites of God. The savage living from hand to mouth is not better than the civilized man who lays up for to-morrow, and feeds himself and half the world besides. It is not as a punishment for our sins that the Lord gives us America, a land filled with stored sunlight ores, fields of golden corn, etc. Possession may be service become a mark of divine

[5]McConnell, Francis J. *The Just Weight*, p. 12. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

favor, a blessing upon courage, industry, and sacrifice.

But it is wrong to make bread at the devil's bidding. Man is assailed with sin through his appetite, is tempted to put himself in the place of God. "If thou be"—sin begins with distrust. Distrust leads to dishonesty. Bread at any selfish suggestion is a confession that Satan is master of this world. This has filled jails, peopled almshouses, stocked asylums, created misery and degradation.

Too much of our wealth is the devil's bread. Not simply adulterations in the baker's dough, but larger robberies. All breaches of trust, gambling, whether in the pool room or on the stock exchange, combinations to increase prices, all greed and knavery, dishonest work, making rotten garments and shoes that will not wear, rank with diseases from the sweating dens, the lies of big business, the liquor traffic, etc. Devil's bread is the bread of idleness, dishonesty, violence, and crime. Better the scant fare of hard times than a doubtful gain in the days of so-called prosperity, which too often means property rather than service.[6]

And somewhere within this same social region dwell the prosperous. America is said to have more gold than was ever amassed at a given time in the history of the world. Europe says that we are vulgarly rich. But is our inner wealth—noble contentment, achieving faith, sacrificial service—commensurate with the towering pyramids of material properties we have piled up with more than Egyptian variety?

Now, let us pause and take the back track on two of

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[6]Elliott, George. Sermon: "Breadmaking (The tempter came and said unto him, 'If thou art the Son of God command that these stones become bread.' But he answered and said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone')," Matt. iv:3, 4. *The Methodist Review*, Sept.–Oct., 1927. Used by permission.

the classes mentioned and see if we can find what it is that makes a difference on the outlook of human beings. Take two examples from the ultra-prosperous: I mean Frank A. Munsey and Cleveland H. Dodge. One of the most successful publishers America has ever had, Mr. Munsey left an estate of 40 millions of dollars to be administered by the trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. If commercial success can satisfy a man, then Frank A. Munsey should have been a very happy man. But one very close to him says that he spoke of it all, of life itself, as "a handful of ashes." Having lost his faith in God and man, not all the healing plasters that wealth supplies could assuage the grievous wound in his soul. According to his own confession, Munsey's career ended in smoke and ashes. Cleveland H. Dodge, too, was a rich man. Sprung from a family long trained to hold its wealth and ability as a public trust, Mr. Dodge nobly fulfilled the traditions of his ancestors. But more than devoting his means to the public good, he gave himself in unstinted service to the Kingdom of God. And when the sun of Cleveland H. Dodge went down behind the hills of time, the skies of Christian hope wore an unearthly brightness; even the smoke and ashes that flesh and blood are naturally heir to were shot through with transfiguring bursts of light flashed from fountains of morning. I tell you, my friends, the reaction of every soul to God and life proves what it is that differentiates hope from despair, material success from spiritual worth. It is faith in the living God. Let men lose this, or let men never have it to lose, and their chariots of gold will darksomely turn into hearses of iron.[7]

[7]Shannon, Frederick F. Sermon: "Transformed Smoke," *Homiletic Review*, April, 1928. Used by permission.

The hardened criminal should be dealt with accordingly, but he who is a petty offender, lapsing through stress of circumstance or through unfavorable associations or environment, should not be considered beyond hope of regeneration. Human frailty is no unusual thing. This, too, is looked upon in different manner according to the nearness or the farness of the wrong as it concerns us. What we consider cute in our children is deemed impertinence in others. When a beloved child of ours uses questionable language, if it be a tiny tot, we smile indulgently and gently remind the youngster of the unusual word, at the same time, however, thinking how clever our darling is. Let some other youngster apply the same epithet to us, and we grow fiercely indignant. We class the little one at once among the ragamuffins of the street. It is well, then, to use the cloak of charity to all and to realize that human nature among all is much alike. To condemn any group as beyond hope is gratuitous. All can rise toward an ampler and better day, all can clear their vision for a brighter and grander outlook upon life. The duty of society, then, is to help in a remedial and pardoning spirit.

The great problem with reference to crime is that of prevention through proper education and normal surroundings and that of rehabilitation after the offender is again to take his place in society.[9]

But like the pressure of the atmosphere of fifteen pounds to the square inch on all of us, there is the ever-present pressure of the ruling ideas of the masters of the economic and business world and the situation of the Church itself. That situation is complicated in thousands

[9]Weiss, Harry. Sermon: "Justice and Mercy," *Homiletic Review*, December, 1927. Used by permission.

of instances by the fact that the Church has given large hostages to the business world to further a building program. Millions of dollars of mortgages are held over churches. There are unpaid pledges of other millions of dollars. It is for the temporal interest of the Church to avoid any disturbance in the placid calm of business prosperity. It is not to be wondered at that the first concern of a large number of trustees and other officials is for carrying through their venture successfully.

Hence there is a very strong feeling to this effect: "There is no use of us or our minister being quixotic. We can very well postpone playing on some notes of the Christian Gospel until a more convenient season. Prudence is the better part of valor. Don't upset the apple cart."

With the full organ of the great redemptive message of Christianity to sound in the world to-day, it is tragic if a church harps only on one monotonous string—"Play safe." The gospel of Jesus is more than a counsel of prudent caution. It is a great message of redemption for the whole of life, redemption from every force that exploits or maims human life.

How can we be real disciples of a Master who upset the world, if we don't upset anything in such a world as ours?[9]

It is our business to make salvation possible and then appeal to the will and conscience of the man to make it actual. Even the most confirmed preachers of the simple or individualistic gospel were fiercest in the fight for Prohibition, because they recognized in the saloon and

[9]Luccock, Halford E. *Preaching Values in New Translations of the New Testament*, p. 86.

the liquor trade a source of frightful temptation too strong for the weak wills of men. Are rank injustices, less-than-living wages, and unspeakable living conditions like those of the steel industry against which the workers themselves rose lately in mad protest—are such conditions any less fatal to the possibility of decent, not to say Christian, living and homes and family life than the saloon? If so, is it not equally our business as ministers of Christ to concern ourselves about the industrial problem? In fact, the common neglect of the social environment by preachers of the purely individualistic gospel is largely responsible for the degradation of many communities as well as the wrecking of multitudes of souls.[10]

It is in the economic sphere, in a word, that the baldest selfishness, greed, and inconsiderateness of others are to be found. We have already seen how even at the present time, in a part of our business and financial world, predatory pagan standards prevail almost as they did before the Christian movement began. Rich and poor, employer and employee, alike too often hold that they are entitled to all they can get and can keep, regardless of the service rendered. Instead of seeking only just compensation for service rendered, both working man and business man too often seek to get as much as they can and to give as little in return as possible. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the passion to get "Something for nothing" dominates modern economic life, in the sense that it gives color and tone to its most characteristic features.[11]

[10]Williams, Charles D. *The Prophetic Ministry for To-day*, p. 65. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

[11]Ellwood, Charles A. *Reconstruction of Religion*, p. 212. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

There are dozens of men and women, younger and older, in our commercial enterprises asking themselves whether Christian principles can be made to work in modern business. They may need to be reminded that no sentiment, however lofty, can be expected to act as a substitute for sound judgment and unflagging industry. They may also be told that the current acquisitive motives are not working in such fashion that present business conditions can be viewed with complacency. But they must recall that the gospel does not offer mere principles which men must put into operation, but the spirit of love which is the spirit of power. The Christian religion stands or falls with the practicability of this spirit. It asserts that the mind of Jesus is the mind of the Lord of earth and heaven, that to work by methods at variance with that mind is to court certain disaster and to impoverish one's soul, that to be ruled by his mind is to encounter criticism, mockery, enmity —a repetition in some sort of Calvary—and inevitably to know the power of his victory.[12]

I began by saying that the descendants of Pilate are more in number than the sands of the sea. They inherit from their immoral, unstable ancestor in this—that they "wash their hands of things." That is to say, they seek to deny, or to avoid responsibility, and to put off the blame, when things go wrong. When evils multiply; when social abuses come to be conspicuous; when politicians play politics, and public servants betray trusts; when everything seems going to the bad; and things are done in churches or in senate chambers that reflect discredit on us, how often we feel like saying,

[12]Coffin, Henry Sloane. *What Is There in Religion?*, p. 51. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

if we do not say it, or hear it said, if we do not use the words ourselves, "Oh, well! I wash my hands of the whole business."[13]

Mr. Wells says that "the darkest shadow upon the outlook of European civilization at the present time is not the war; it is the failure of any coöperative spirit between labor and the directing classes." We have got to get rid of that, and it is only a sample of the things we have got to get rid of. And the thing that we have got to get hold of is faith in men—the faith that makes faithful.

If the Son of Man should come to-day he would find this faith on the earth; less than we have a right to look for, but enough yet to leaven the nations. He would find men who believe with all their souls that faith is mightier than force even in the restraint of evildoers; men like Henry Ford, who take prisoners by the hand and bid them stand up and be men; men like Thomas Osborne, who go down to the bottom of a pit that is well-nigh bottomless, such as Sing Sing Prison—and call darkened and hopeless men up into light and hope —and they come.[14]

1. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

That will change everything, if life is under its guidance. The man of wealth will recognize that this man who works for him is not his slave, nor a mere "hand," nor a tool. He will feel that he is a human

[13]Frothingham, Paul Revere. Sermon: "Pilate Washing His Hands," *Boston Preachers*, edited by A. Avery Gates, p. 242. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

[14]Gladden, Washington. *The Interpreter*, p. 94. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

being, made in the image of God and destined to immortality. And the man who toils with his hands will recognize that his employer is not his master, nor his "boss," nor the manipulator of a machine of which he is just one wheel, but a human being like himself made in God's image and a brother according to the teaching of Jesus.

2. Ultimate values are human values.

This is the second principle that must be recognized both by labor and by capital. This is to say that ultimate values lie in the soul. Things have in themselves no intrinsic worth. . . . Civilization is a spiritual thing. Human values are the only values that count. No matter how wealth may accumulate, if men decay, then does the land soon hasten to destruction. As Christian business men, and as Christian working men, we must recognize this essential truth, this controlling principle. Otherwise we shall go on from bad to worse till the cycle is complete and Western civilization goes the way of all the giant forms of empires that have towered and are gone.[15]

Too many twentieth-century Christians are so pampered with conveniences and screened off from the realities of the common man's life that they have lost all capacity to sympathize. They can become furious only against movements that jeopardize the deep sleep of contentment which has been brought on by material success. We may well wonder how large sections of American Christians would receive him who spoke so earnestly about certain people who "devoured widow's houses" and who issued the very democratic invitation,

[15]Mouzon, Edwin Dubose. *The Program of Jesus*, p. 188. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Indeed, there is reason to think that Jesus would be crucified afresh if he should confront Western civilization as it is to-day. If Jesus came to the United States to-day, he would be rejected as an impossible visionary, as an extreme pacifist, as an undesirable. He would not be a victim of what Dr. Halford E. Luccock calls the "mental lock-step of America." I can easily imagine him rising in blazing indignation at child labor in some parts of this country, and at church-going profiteers who starve the public with unreasonable monopoly prices on the necessities of life. Long before he could complete his message, we should label him a "red," and his name would head the roll of those modern crusaders for God who are blacklisted as "dangerous men."

What shall we do with such a Christ? Shall we join the ranks of the crucifiers and condemn him as an enemy of our petty ambitions, or shall we help him to carry the Cross?[16]

That society has not yet developed a social order which is entirely Christian is a truism which no intelligent person would think of denying. This being true, the pulpit must emphasize not only individual righteousness but social betterment as well. Precedents for this are not lacking. The Hebrew prophets were strenuous and eloquent proclaimers of the sin of man's inhumanity to man. Amos in the following burning words denounces greed, selfishness, and economic oppression: "Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon

[16]Knudson, Carl. Sermon: "The Cross in Modern Life," *The Christian Herald*, March 9, 1929. Used by permission.

be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos viii:4–6.) Isaiah excoriates those who "join house to house and field to field" and make their neighbors homeless wanderers. (Isaiah v-8.) And Micah hurls his words of malediction upon the sinners who "covet fields and take them away by violence; and houses and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (Micah ii:2.)

Then, too, there is a social message in the teaching of one greater than any prophet. The words of Jesus are full of social dynamite. He did not come into the world with codes of economic laws, plans of reorganization, or a conglomeration of methods for transforming society. He did come, however, with a point of view, a way of approach and an ideal to be attained. His social teachings do not supply our generation with facts but rather with spirit and aim. There are few economic or industrial questions upon which his teachings do not shed light. The preservation of the family, a living wage, sanitary and comfortable housing, the protection of childhood, safe and decent work conditions, the improvement of communities both urban and rural, all are questions which cannot be divorced from the teachings of Jesus. Any worker for social betterment can find guidance, inspiration, and illumination in the words of the Son of Man.

Naturally the pulpit has, through the centuries, preached a gospel of social justice. The so-called "social gospel" is not a new thing under the sun. The callow theologue who believes that the idea of the preaching of

a gospel of man's social responsibilities to his fellow man is a discovery of his own scholastic decade, is not especially deeply rooted in the past. To read St. Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and other church fathers is to come into contact with page after page of material having to do with ways and means of social betterment. There has been no period of ecclesiastical history which has been characterized by a purely individualistic gospel. Luther and Calvin were both protagonists of a more Christian social order. John Wesley set in motion forces which transformed English life. The most bitter critic of the Puritan preachers of the New England of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot accuse them of ignoring the life around them. Any person having the courage and hardihood to read the sermons of Increase and Cotton Mather cannot help but being impressed that both of them had a high sense of the truth that religion must not be separated from life. Of course, these men did not use the terminology of to-day. But they did have a high sense of the relation between the Christian religion and social justice. A series of books could be compiled consisting of excerpts from sermons preached in every century of the Christian Era dealing with the improvement of the social order.

Yet the particular social emphasis which characterizes much preaching of to-day does not trace its history even as far back as the days of Wesley. Its roots we find in the nineteenth century. Beginning with 1840 the idea of Christianity making itself felt in improving economic conditions began to figure largely in the thought life of England. Thomas Carlyle published *Past and Present*, a book which has possibly had more influence upon the modern man's ideas of economic and social righteousness than any other volume of the nine-

teenth century. At least it can be said without exaggeration that no man who has failed to read this book is thoroughly grounded in the history of Christian sociology. Carlyle's book caused John Ruskin to turn away from the work of an art critic in which he had won distinction and honor and don the armor of a social gladiator. Through *Modern Painters* and his other books Ruskin had tried to improve the art of England but he decided that he was approaching his problem from the wrong side. He had always contended that art and life could not be separated. From the beginning of his career he had realized that art is always the product of social conditions. As the years passed by he more emphatically, and even vehemently, contended that a noble art can exist only when it is the product of a healthy society; that national taste is a matter of national morals. He was, moreover, a man of fine humanitarian spirit. This, together with his superlative literary skill, made him a potent influence in the education of the people of England in the truths of social justice. Other men enlisted in the fray. Frederick Dennison Maurice in his volume *Social Morality* showed clearly that any religion which countenances the oppression of man by man is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Charles Kingsley, preacher novelist and militant reformer of society, made his influence felt both as a preacher and a novelist. The social emphasis of the modern American pulpit cannot be understood apart from the writings of these nineteenth-century Englishmen.

This movement in American homiletics has developed within the memory of men who are still in the vigor of life. Dr. Washington Gladden, for many years pastor of the First Congregational Church, Columbus, Ohio, was one of the pioneers in this phase of the history of

religious thought in America. In 1876 he published a book under the title *Working Men and Their Employers*. Twice he delivered the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School and each time he discussed questions in the field where sociology and religion go hand in hand, his first series being "Tools and the Man" and his second, "Social Salvation." Dr. Lyman Abbott was also one of the early teachers of Christian sociology and through the pages of *The Outlook* disseminated to large groups of thinking men and women. These men have been forerunners of a large group of leaders who have through addresses and books preached year after year the gospel of social justice and brotherhood. Francis G. Peabody, Walter Rauschenbusch, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Professor Charles A. Ellwood, Bishop Charles D. Williams, Charles Stelze, and Professor Harry F. Ward have been outstanding figures in the army of religious leaders who have taught American Christendom that religion is not only a matter of personal salvation and of individual justice, but that it includes the Christianizing of the larger community, the transforming of society by means of the dynamic of the Christian religion. As a result of these teachings the Church has heard during the past twenty-five years a distinctively social message which has powerfully reacted on our national life and ideals.

The social teachings of the Church have not been confined to the abstract or the general. Again and again religious bodies have spoken out with lucidity and force about concrete problems in American communities. The now famous *Social Creed of the Churches* has had the merit of being highly specific. It is grouped about the basic fact of economic justice long ago expressed by Carlyle: "A fair day's wages for a fair day's work."

In modern parlance the same truth is elucidated in the following words: "A living wage as a minimum in every industry and the highest living wage that each industry can afford, and the most equitable division of the product of industry that can ultimately be devised." Closely related to the evil of the lack of a living wage are the social evils of child labor, bad housing, enervating and debasing conditions of toil, long hours, and unjustly circumscribed opportunity. Against all of these economic sins the Church has made its influence felt.

One of the outstanding instances of the Church's social leadership was the famous report which the commission of inquiry of the Inter-church World Movement made in regard to the steel strike of 1919. This report, which was prepared under the leadership of Bishop Francis J. McConnell, is a document which for decades to come will be notable in the history of social progress in America. Although it was severely criticized in many church quarters, it did more to abolish the twelve-hour day in the steel industry than any other single factor.

Another epoch-making publication in this field was the report on "The Church and Industrial Reconstruction." This work was the product of the Committee on War and the Religious Outlook. It is a fair, thoughtful, honest, stimulating, and courageous discussion of underlying problems. It contains one sentence, at least, that every religious leader should indelibly write into his consciousness: "The Church is summoned to reconsider its gospel, to redefine its attitude toward the present social order, and to interpret for our time the way of life involved in Christian discipleship."

A concrete instance of the power of the Church as an institution promoting social betterment is its leadership

in the battle against the liquor traffic. True, the victory is not yet won. In spite of the prohibition amendment "flaming youth" of both sexes boasts of its defiances of the laws of the land and the laws of decency. Middle-aged men connive with the breaking of law by patronizing the bootlegger. Yet no one who has lived for thirty years can help seeing that the past decades have witnessed a progress toward the annihilation of the liquor traffic which the most roseate-visioned optimist would not have dared to prophesy even twenty years ago. And the student of social history as he turns to those pages which tell of the drinking customs of a century ago cannot but feel that the past century has witnessed a veritable miracle. That the liquor traffic has reached the twilight zone of its existence has been due to the spirit of militant Christianity which even to-day has "just begun to fight."

One of the fundamental functions of the preacher in the improving of the social order is to declare uncompromisingly the Christian principles and ideals. Without a doubt it is his duty to promote the Christian ideal for society by promoting the Christian ideal for society. The New Testament is full of social principle. The teachings of Jesus have a very definite applicability to the economic and industrial problems which confront our modern civilization. No clear-thinking student of the principles of Jesus will have any particular difficulty in applying them to the life of to-day. For example, Jesus said nothing about the twelve-hour day but he said much about the worth of the individual. His whole teaching is permeated with the idea of respect for humanity. Living in a simple rural society he did not discuss the ethics of abnormally large fortunes. He did teach, however, that "a man's life consisteth not in the

abundance of things which he possesseth." He did give to society a new dynamic which is in direct contradiction to the cave-man ethics of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." If the Golden Rule means anything it connotes the truth that a man must bring the spirit of brotherhood into every department of social life, that as a citizen, a neighbor, a business man, a husband, and a father he must be animated by the fraternal spirit and the ideal of human helpfulness.

This gospel has been faithfully preached from many pulpits during the last two or three decades. There are still, though, preachers who entirely ignore this aspect of the gospel, who stress exclusively the idea of individual salvation. It is tragically true that some twentieth-century pulpits preach such a warped version of the teachings of Jesus. Fortunate indeed is the churchgoer who has never heard a sermon giving the impression that all that God requires of man is that he so conduct himself as to escape eternal punishment. A gospel that fails to emphasize man's ethical responsibilities to his brother man is not a gospel. It is a homiletical travesty, an ethical monstrosity.

On the other hand, some of the would-be preachers of what they call the "social gospel" have failed just as ignominiously to declare the whole truth of God. Lectures on the tenement-house question are not sermons. A discourse on the twelve-hour day might be highly edifying, provided, of course, that the speaker knows what he is talking about, but such a disquisition is not a sermon. Then, too, in all good preaching the thought of the sermon must connect itself with the experience of the hearers. And there is a grave possibility of the social sermon not measuring up to this basic requirement of good preaching. More than once, congregations

of bewildered men and women have groped in darkness while the young preacher fresh from the seminary has dumped undigested classroom material upon their defenseless heads. The very fact that this type of preaching is different from the traditional methods of approach is in itself a high reason for the man of the pulpit exercising especial care in making his material unacademic and direct. There is another place where the preacher who labels himself a "social man" must be very careful. Any sermon is either strengthened or weakened by the practical ethics of the preacher. There is material for a good-sized volume in the field of applied homiletics in the following couplet from Chaucer's description of the parish priest in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales:*

> But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
> He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

Especially when a preacher places his primary emphasis on applied Christianity he needs to see that his practice accords reasonably well with his precepts. The man who fulminates Sunday after Sunday against our imperfect economic system and then manifests more than the ordinary degree of stinginess and greed in his own financial affairs is most certainly an unedifying spectacle. Instead of hastening a day of social justice he is one of its most serious hindrances.

That modern life needs preaching stressing the application of the social truths enunciated by Jesus of Nazareth is one of the preëminent truths of our generation. The burning need of such preaching is the most convincing argument for the avoiding of the faults which neutralize its influence. A sham social gospel is soon overthrown by its own weight. Genuine social preaching

cannot but in the long run exert an influence which will hasten what William Morris speaks of as "the wonderful days a-coming when all shall be better than well."

A discourse which might serve as a model for a comprehensive, helpful, spiritually illuminating social sermon is found in Dean Charles R. Brown's "Where Do You Live?"[17] The address is based on the call to Moses to "Be ready in the morning and come up." Here we have a man leading a race of slaves out of bondage into the land of freedom and opportunity. A mountain, steep and rugged, looms before him. He hears a voice saying "Be ready in the morning and come up." He was to climb the mountain to gain the vision of reality which he would remember until the very end of his days. This man's experience serves as a type. We plod along at a dead level thinking ordinary thoughts and doing everyday things. The sun of a great opportunity arises. A challenge of a new day calls us. Perhaps only once does the voice resound. Maturity utters the same call. Life is full of stiff, hard climbs. Hard tasks are ahead for all. It is no child's play to get ready to live a real life and do real work. Moreover, the World War has brought to our generation problems far-reaching and stupendous. Are we going to have a lasting peace? Is justice to prevail? Will right principles rule industry? Are men and women of the belated races going to be treated as brothers? Is civilization going to show itself civilized? What are we going to do in the face of a world to be rebuilt? Are we going to be shirkers, pleasure seekers, social parasites? Perhaps a voice will say to us: "Be ready to take those principles of personal and social well-being which you have seen written across the sky

[17] *The Summons of a New Day*, p. 135. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

in letters of fire and write them into a better social order. Do what you can to help replace greed and selfish aggression and to establish Christ's kingdom upon earth. And more than this man hears a summons from a world unseen. An endless series of to-morrows awaits with their mighty appeal. Look ahead to the great to-morrow and "greet the unseen with a cheer."

VII

SIN AS DISCUSSED IN RECENT SERMONIC LITERATURE

If we lived only to ourselves, if the consequences of our actions terminated within the circle of our own personality, if we ourselves and for ourselves put in the sickle and reaped the harvest we have sown, even then life were an awful trust. But the law of relation deepens this awfulness a thousand fold. Our personalities, though distinct, are not exclusive. We are exerting an influence every day of the week. Our lives are intertwined with the lives of others, and we struggle in vain to get free. The unseen chain of influence enfolds us all, and one false step by you or me may entail another's fall. It is not sin merely as an act, but sin as a principle, that is thus reproductive. Though we may commit no overt act of wrong, we may create an atmosphere of evil. This principle is all-pervasive; it is a process of moral emanation, so that it is not what we do merely, but what we are, that counts.[1]

Indeed, at no point do modern Christians differ more sharply from their predecessors than in the serious facing of the problem of sin. Christians of former times were burdened with a heavy sense of their transgressions, and their primary interest in the gospel was its promised reëstablishment of their guilty souls in the

[1]Howard, Henry. *Fast Hold on Faith*, p. 157. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

fellowship of a holy God. Modern Christianity, however, is distinguished from all that by a jaunty sense of moral well-being; when we admit our sins we do it with complacency and cheerfulness; our religion is generally characterized by an easy-going self-righteousness. Bunyan's pilgrim, with his lamentable load upon his back, crying, "What shall I do! . . . I am . . . undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me," is no fit symbol of a typically modern Christian.[2]

Finally, I must add that to me the most consoling and the most invigorating of all human thoughts is this idea of judgment. It is the most consoling because it gives immeasurable dignity to our otherwise poor, brief, frail, and mean life; it gives to it universal meaning. Those who are not subject to judgment are children, insane people, and idiots. Children are very sweet in their unaccountableness, but, as Aristotle says, no one would wish to be a child forever, because that would exclude him from the highest and best experiences of mankind. Insane people we imprison that they may not commit harm, but we admit that they are entirely unaccountable. Idiots, when they are harmless, may go where they like and do what they like, even in political or church meetings, anywhere so long as they are harmless. But these have no part in the world. To be the subject of judgment is to be a reality in the home, a reality in society, a reality in the nation, a reality in the morally organized race of men. To be subject to the judgment of God is to be part of the intelligible universe, a child of its discipline, a prophet of its character, purpose, and joy. It is therefore to me the most consoling

[2]Fosdick, Harry E. *Christianity and Progress*, p. 170. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

of all our human thoughts, it is also the most invigorating. To be the subject of the judgment of God takes a man out of the category of things incidental and perishable. To be judged here we must exist, we must be realities; and if we are to be judged hereafter, we must hereafter exist for God. Nothing so lifts a man in the order of being, nothing so takes him out of the whole region of things and of mere perishable existence as the idea that assures him that the character of his thinking and feeling and conduct are of concern to the Infinite here, that he is the subject of the moral judgment of God now and forever.[3]

One reason why it is so important to know all of God's laws is that the same rule holds good here as in our own courts. Ignorance of the law excuses no one. If a man steps from off the top of a building, ignorance of the law of gravitation does not save him from capital punishment. Ignorance of the laws of physiology and hygiene does not exempt one from disease. It is only by acquainting ourselves as far as possible with the laws according to which God rules the world that we are able to take advantage of them and escape punishment for their violation.

It is the same with God's moral laws as with his physical or physiological laws. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is the law, and the only way to escape the penalty is by finding out what are sins and avoiding them. Vice and smallpox are both contagious, and, even if you do not know this to be true, you will not be able to escape injury if you suffer yourself to become infected. If you fall into a moral abyss the plea that you

[3]Gordon, George A. Sermon: "The Idea of Judgment," preached May 4, 1925. Used by permission of the author.

did not mean to fall, or that you did not know the danger, will not save you from a damaged soul any more than the same excuse will save you from broken bones when you fall into a chasm.[4]

The choice is plain, if one must speak only of repression. Repress the impulse, or repress the memory. When it becomes a matter of memory, then it is a sheer struggle for repression, there is no higher expression except in the mercy of a forgiving God. If the repression of the memory seems easy, read the story in the hardened faces of blasé youth whenever you find them. That coarsened face reflects the bitter struggle with accusing conscience. That cancerous memory is as dangerous to normal mentality as has ever been claimed by the "moderns" for repression.

This is all a part of impulsive living. The philosophy of it says that man is a bundle of appetites to be satisfied. Life is a process of immediate satisfactions, like the life of the child.

Such a standard of living Christianity rejects with emphasis. The denial begins fundamentally with the conception of personality, which is implied. Man is not a bundle of impulses alone. He is a spiritual being. His destiny is not the satisfaction of appetite. His destiny is eternal life. Life is faith, service, sacrifice, and expression of higher values.[5]

For not until all the people begin to feel responsibility for community conditions will it be possible for com-

[4]Slosson, E. E. *Sermons of a Chemist*, p. 195. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

[5]Dysinger, Wendell S. Sermon: "The Distance of To-morrow," *American Lutheran Preaching*, edited by Miles H. Krumbine, p. 86. Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

munities to be saved. If only we could get clearly before us that better civilization which every great prophetic spirit has seen from afar!—A truer world, in which every man, woman, and little child would be given a fair chance for self-development; in which men would look upon one another not as foes, nor as competitors, but as friends and brothers; in which love would be the ruling principle, and even-handed justice would be meted out to every humblest son of toil. To say that this is an ideal for whose realization we must long wait and labor is to speak soberly. But to say that this represents an ideal which can never be realized is to become faint of heart. And to jeopardize its realization by greed or by hatred, by cowardice or by complacency, is to become corrupt of heart. What is sin? Sin is treachery to a great ideal. It is the Benedict Arnold of the human soul betraying the possibility of a better world. It is the selfish, anti-social, cowardly, complacent attitude which would prevent forever the dawning of that brighter day for which all earth's fairest spirits have lived and labored.[6]

Christ's denunciation of the sins of his contemporaries is his condemnation of wrong human relationships in every age. It is his official order for a general offensive for all times against all fronts where social sins are entrenched. The Son of Man was the relentless enemy of all institutions built on "Man's inhumanity to man." Christianity, if it be loyal to its founder, can never sheathe the sword until all social wrongs are slain.[7]

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[6]Little, Ernest Fremont. *What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?*, p. 81. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

[7]Frazer, John W. *The Untried Civilization*, p. 85. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

Nor can we forget the cleansing of smirched lives and the salvation of the dregs of our own social order by the religion of Christ through the ministry of those who, like their Master, have felt themselves specially commissioned to seek the lowest and the lost. Vachel Lindsay has set before us the tatterdemalion group who owed their rescue and redemption to one such notable ministry in his lines entitled "General William Booth enters into Heaven":

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
The saints smiled gravely, and they said, "He's come."
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Walking lepers followed rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug-fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail!
Vermin-eaten saints with moldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of death—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
. . . It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land made free!
. . . Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl;
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

It is not an overdrawn picture of the recreating and transfiguring power of the gospel as preached and applied by spirits afire with earnestness.[8]

Individualism is the curse of commercial and industrial and political life in America. Men and women

[8]Coffin, Henry Sloane. *What Is There in Religion?*, p. 28. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

have assumed that religion is something between them and God and so, while very religious, they have been hard and cunning and vengeful and selfish in their relations with each other. As employers, as possessors of great wealth, as wielders of economic and political power they have shown an amazing indifference to the needs of the masses whose very lives are literally in their keeping. Lazarus has lain in sores at their gate, unseen and unfed. Mordecais have been strung up on the gallows erected by unchristian corporation policies in whose formation so-called Christian men have had a part. The chairman of a great coal company recently asserted that the great strike and the human suffering involved must be considered from a purely business basis; that he saw miners merely as so much machinery, and that no human rights were involved in the struggle. The president of another great coal company, when confronted with the hideous condition in the bunkhouses where his strike breakers lived, expressed no sense of regret or responsibility for the situation. Such statements brought a gasp of astonishment from the press table and words of indignation from the Senate Investigation Committee, but they are the natural result of a religious individualism which considers its relation to God in no way affected by its relationship to men.[9]

The wise men of Babylon were silent. Then came Daniel. The prophet of God is usually the man who alone can interpret the will of God. "*Mene, Mene, Te-kel, Upharsin.*" What was the meaning of these cryptic words? "*Mene:* God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. *Te-kel:* thou art weighed in the balances,

[9]Day, Albert Edward. *Present Perils in Religion*, p. 87. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

and art found wanting. *Peres:* thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Could a sentence of doom be more solemn? God grant it may never be pronounced upon us! Something of its significance some of us have known. "*Mene*": the end has come to your opportunities, your privileges, your work. "*Tekel*": thou art weighed in the balances; your failures, your faults, your unfaithfulness, far outweigh all your goodness, your virtues, and those deeds on which you have proudly relied. "*Peres*": another has been assigned your place; another will sit upon the throne and wear the crown. God grant that before such a sentence is pronounced upon us we may turn to him in repentance and in trust!

This is for us a day of salvation. Instead of the doom pronounced upon the king, there comes to us the good news of the gospel. We hear it even in the words of the Old Testament: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."[10]

The maddest thing in the world is to do wrong. The most stupid folly in the world is to do wrong. The most grievous waste in the world is to do wrong. Let any man in the world neglect the call of God, the claims of Christ, the master of men; let such claims be ignored and forgotten and there comes a retribution for such neglect too perilous for me to depict in human speech. "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it. Whosoever

[10]Erdman, Charles R. Sermon: "Weighed in the Balances," *Christian Herald*, February 24, 1928. Used by permission.

shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." You cannot trifle with any duty in the world and not be harmed. You cannot trifle with a duty in the home, or in the state, or toward God, and not be harmed. You cannot trifle with duty anywhere, at any time, but that retribution follows in the wake of your trifling and presents you with the wretched product of your deed. God can get on without us, but we cannot get on without him.[11]

It is readily apparent to the student of current tendencies of thought that the modern American possesses little of the old Calvinistic sense of sin. We have traveled far from the days when Cotton Mather spent days in fasting and weeping over his sins. In our day we are not especially concerned over the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." There are several reasons for this attitude. One is the reaction of enlightened Christianity against some of the unethical and unintelligent teachings of earlier generations. Between the covers of obsolete volumes can be found dozens of sermons depicting God as a monstrosity of cruelty. The fact that Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" has not added to his esteem by recent generations. Although students of the writings of the great pastor of Northampton know that this sulphuric discourse is not typical of his best sermonic material, it does furnish us with a sample of a decadent Calvinism at its worst. Words like the following do not arouse the admiration of the man of to-day:

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the

[11]Truett, George W. Sermon: "Privilege and Peril of Opportunity," *Great Southern Preaching*, edited by Charles M. Crowe, p. 247. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath toward you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear you in his sight; you are ten times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: It is a great furnace of wrath that you are held over in the hand of a God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell."

When a people, who for generations had had pabulum of this kind crammed down their throats, came to the place where they no longer accepted it, their revolt would naturally be ultra-positive. William Ellery Channing, the leader of the Unitarian movement, had little to say about sin. Ralph Waldo Emerson, representative of the dissidence of the dissent against the old order, has been accused by many of eliminating every idea of the fact of sin from his creed. But, in fact, this truth never became entirely eradicated from the pulpit of Puritan heritage. The teachings of centuries cannot be rooted out by a single generation. Besides, the doctrine of sin and punishment has enough truth at its basis to keep it alive. Along with the grace of God as exemplified in the life and death of Jesus Christ, Dwight L. Moody emphasized the enormity of sin. The Presbyterian pulpit with the heritage of John Knox has always sounded a note of positive militancy. Other Calvinistic groups, like the Baptist and Disciples, have rather consistently preached a gospel that included the idea of sin and punishment. Even the Methodistic churches with a different spiritual ancestry have not ignored the fact that "the soul that sinneth must die." Yet during the past century the tendency has been for preachers to

say less and less about man's having to face judgment and pay the penalty of his transgressions. The reaction against the distorted theology of earlier generations has tended to be responsible for a gospel lacking the essential sterner elements.

Other factors, also, have been responsible for this trend. All types of flimsy systems of ethics have been foisted upon the public from divers sources. In a commencement address given several years ago at Dartmouth College, entitled "The Changing Mind of Man," Dr. E. E. Slosson gave expression to the following thoughts:

"One of the changes that we must frankly face is the rebellion against the code of morals upon which our civilization is based. Formerly those who broke with the Church were careful to declare that they acted in the interests of a purer religion and a higher morality. Those who denied the divinity of Christ were loud in their profession of admiration for the teachings of Jesus. Now, however, we must recognize that a large and increasing class in every country not only weaken the standards of Christian ethics, but explicitly repudiate them. . . . Violence is advocated as a necessity of the class struggle and even as a desirable thing in itself. Murder is taught as a fine art; the opium dream of De Quincey has become a reality. The violation of contract, the breaking of promises, is regarded as highest ethics. Hatred is diligently cultivated. Licentiousness is openly advocated. Altruism is advocated as undesirable or impossible. Sympathy is denounced as a symptom of weakness and degeneracy. Charity is considered as a double injury: it curses him that gives and him that takes. Thrift and industry are classed as vices instead of virtues. Cursing is commended; drunkenness is de-

fended; family quarrels are encouraged; and wife-beating is advocated by popular writers of the day."

To be sure the ministry never has countenanced such ethics, but the teachings which during the past fifty years have vitiated the moral standards of the American people have not been without their influence upon the pulpit. All of us to a certain degree are the products of our environments. The preacher cannot be, and should not be, entirely detached from the life around. As more liberal ethical standards have become ingrained in American life, he has inevitably been inclined to preach a less rigid ethics. This does not necessarily mean that he has compromised in the discussion of moral questions. Comparatively seldom has this been done. It does mean, however, that preaching has been less puritanic, less prone to stress the sterner elements of the Christian teaching and less insistent on pointing men to a path that is "straight and narrow."

There has been, nevertheless, within the past few years an evidence of a renewed perception of the sinfulness of sin. Many enlightened pulpits are warning men and women of the ethical dangers latent in materialistic psychology and a perverted ethics. The rediscovery of the Hebrew prophets with their denunciation of sin, individual and social, has played a part in making the gospel of the twentieth century more virile and positive. The studies that have been made in recent years of the sterner and more rigid aspects of the life and teachings of Jesus have also been potent factors in the production of preaching characterized by more granite and iron.

But the report that can be made in regard to the emphasis upon sin by the modern preacher is not entirely negative. In certain current volumes of sermons

this essential aspect of an inclusive homiletics receives its due attention. One volume of discourses of which this is true is *Fast Hold on Faith* by Dr. Henry Howard, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City. Among the notable sermons in this work are these: "Moral Mishaps," "Moral Cataracts," "The Solidarity of Sin," and "Essential Sin." There are, in addition, other sermons in this book and in Dr. Howard's other volume, *The Peril of Power*, which stress the perils of sin even though the titles of the sermons do not necessarily inform the reader of that fact.

In the latter book there is a discourse entitled "The Back-fire of Sin"[12] which is typical of Dr. Howard's method of setting forth the degenerating influences of sin. The text is "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul." (Proverbs viii:36.) The basic thought is that righteousness is fundamental to personal unification, that sin disintegrates. This is, of course, true of the grosser sins. Here the evil fruits are soon apparent in rotting tissue and pestilential blood. But the more subtle and insidious forms of sin, those which do not necessarily receive social opprobrium, are equally deadly in their effects. Sins of the mind which never crystallize into actions do violence to a man's inner conviction. They close the eyes of a man to the truer vision. They cause the mind to blind itself to facts and feed on lies. Any man who takes sin of any kind by the hand violates his better self. He quarrels with the laws of right. He has violated himself, has not only wronged God but wronged his own soul.

Another sermon dealing with the same truth in an entirely different way is "The Trajectory of Evil," by Dr. Charles F. Wishart, President of the College of

[12]P. 154.

Wooster.[13] The text of this discourse is the following: "Then the lust when it hath conceived beareth sin; and the sin, when it hath full-grown, bringeth forth death." (James 1:15.) Although this address is not an ordinary "book sermon," it is based on a book. Dr. Wishart tells the story of Tito Melena as found in George Eliot's *Romola.* This brilliant, attractive young Greek is devoid of moral sense. His limitation, however, does not prevent him from making friends and winning popularity and prestige. He sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind. He betrays his friends, is false to his wife, and disloyal to his civic trusts. The old man who had rescued him from a shipwreck sends to him for help in an hour of danger, but none is forthcoming. One day upon the streets of Florence he finds himself face to face with the one to whom he owed so much and to whom he had been so basely faithless. With a contemptuous sneer he denies knowing him. The mills of fate begin to grind. Tito has played with both political parties and betrayed both. A mob pursues him. To escape them he leaps over a bridge into the dark waters beneath. Once before he had saved himself by swimming. Spent and exhausted he reaches the shore. He drags himself up on the bank and there he finds himself looking into the glaring eyes of the one who had once been a veritable father to him. Hours later Tito is found lying dead on the bank and beside him is the dead body of a strange, wild old man, who has his fingers clutched about Tito's throat.

"This," said Dr. Wishart, "is the trajectory of evil." The word trajectory signifies the curve which an object makes in the air. Such a curve is a matter of mathe-

[13] *The God of the Unexpected*, p. 192. Used by permission of The Wooster Press.

matics. The trajectory of a missile is as definite and sure as the law of gravity. "Lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." Shakespeare tells of how even-handed justice commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice to the sinner's own lips. Nemesis follows hard upon the steps of the wrongdoer. To sow to the flesh means to reap of the flesh corruption.

But both of these sermons end with a message of hope. Dr. Howard quotes the beautiful rendering of the third verse of the ninetieth psalm in the Masoretic Bible: "Thou turneth man to contrition; and sayeth, Return, ye children of men," the central thought of which is, "Now that discipline has done its work, now that the remembrance of your folly has wrought in you the sense of shame and blame, now that your hearts are chastened into humility and all their stubbornness melted into penitence and tears, the way is open back to all the warmth of my heart and the welcome of my home." Dr. Wishart closes with a message of the power of Christ over the trajectory of evil. This power can arrest the sickening downward sag and sweep with which evil plunges into retribution.

Sermons of this type are the modern expression of age-old truths. They are couched in the language of our time, but they contain truths which, in some form or other, have been enunciated from the Christian pulpit in every period of the history of the Church. The most distinctive contemporary preaching about sin is that which gives preëminence to its social significance. It has not been easy for selfish humanity to comprehend all of the implications of the teachings of Jesus. The Christian message has time after time been warped, distorted, and garbled. A teaching which is the quintes-

sence of altruism has again and again in the hands of its prophets been made to represent an almost undiluted egoism. During the years that Christian preaching has been in existence selfishness has times innumerable masqueraded in the garments of religion. Sermons have been preached giving the impression that the sole object of a man's conforming to the mandates of Christianity was to save his own soul from punishment.

There is a story floating around which is probably too genuinely humorous to be true, to the effect that at a religious meeting a sister rose and in part gave the following testimony: "When I was out in the world I used to like laces and silks and jewelry, but I saw that they were dragging me down to hell, so I gave them to my sister." The anecdote is funny, but there is enough potential truth in it to make it tragic. Remarks just as essentially unchristian as this have been made by men and women who have thought that they were saying something exceedingly pious. Years ago I heard a neurotic young man tell of his former wickedness and his present beatificness. Among other things he spoke of how many of the other young people in his town were getting so much more pleasure out of life than he was. He added, however, with a smirk of joy that it would be different when he was singing with the saved while they were suffering the pangs of hell.

Modern Christianity has won for itself a firm grasp of the genuinely fundamental truth of man's ethical responsibilities to his fellow man. It is indisputably true that no man liveth to himself. A far-reaching truth of life is expressed in the words of Kipling's *Tomlinson:*

"That the sin they do by two and two they must pay for one by one." And the converse of this is that no man commits a sin which does not in some way wrong

another human being. This social conception of sin is not new. It is Biblical and Christian. It has been preached in practically every era in the history of homiletics. Yet at times it has been almost buried beneath quibbling pedantries and dehumanized theologies. One of the tragedies of modern thought is that there are even to-day tens of thousands of well-intentioned American church members who thus far have had no opportunity to come into contact with the social conception of sin. The tragic ignorance of this important aspect of Christian teaching has had consequences productive of unspeakable harm.

A favorite illustration among preachers who lay stress on the social aspects of sin is found in one of Walter Rauschenbusch's books.[14] In Toronto if the health officer finds milk dirty the cans are emptied and marked with large red labels. One day a Mennonite farmer found his cans thus labeled and he swore a worldly oath. He was brought before his church and excluded. But his dismissal from church was not due to his attempting to sell impure milk to the people of Toronto, thus endangering the lives of their children, but for "expressing his belief in the damnation of the wicked in a non-theological way." Dr. Rauschenbusch says that if this man's church had fully digested the social gospel it would have said: "Our brother was angry and used the name of God profanely in his anger; we urge him to settle this alone with God. But he has defiled the milk supply by unclean methods. Having the life and health of young children in his keeping, he has failed in his trust. Voted that he be excluded until he has proved his lasting repentance."

The social conception of sin takes into account long-

[14] *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 35.

distance sinning. An architect is bribed and allows flimsy work to be done. The building catches fire. It proves a veritable fire trap. This man is as guilty of murder as the thug who hits his victim with a piece of pipe in a dark alley. The landlord who, in order to save ten dollars, does not have his tuberculosis-ridden tenement disinfected and exposes a whole family to death is as deep a criminal as the night-prowling, death-dealing burglar. The capitalist who mulcts a railroad and sends hundreds to destruction by means of a rotten bridge is not only a thief but a murderer. The large-scale vender of worthless patent medicines may endow colleges but his sin against society has vastly wider ramifications than that of the poor, weak-willed drunkard who staggers home at midnight. The vilest sins have more often than not been committed by white-handed, suave-mannered, unctuous-voiced hypocrites. The fact that the pulpit of our age, in many instances, is not failing to teach the sinfulness of long-distance sinning is a reason for placing a high mark to its credit. Even if there is in divers quarters somewhat of a tendency to preach a gospel anemic in its gentleness, there are other pulpits from which come sermons with a noble sternness, a comprehensive grasp of the meaning of sin, and a message of repentance like that which resounded in the valley of the Jordan nineteen hundred years ago.

VIII

THE PULPIT AND EVOLUTION

THE purpose of the following statement is to assist in correcting two erroneous impressions which seem to be current among certain groups of persons. The first is that religion to-day stands for medieval theology; the second, that science is materialistic and irreligious.

A JOINT STATEMENT UPON THE RELATIONS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION

By a Group of Scientists, Religious Leaders, and Men of Affairs

We, the undersigned, deeply regret that in recent controversies there has been a tendency to present science and religion as irreconcilable and antagonistic domains of thought, for in fact they meet distinct human needs, and in the rounding out of human life they supplement rather than displace or oppose each other.

The purpose of science is to develop, without prejudice or preconception of any kind, a knowledge of the facts, the laws, and the processes of nature. The even more important task of religion, on the other hand, is to develop the consciences, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind. Each of these two activities represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress, and the happiness of the human race.

It is a sublime conception of God which is furnished by science, and one wholly consonant with the highest ideals of religion, when it represents him as revealing himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man and in the age-long inbreathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his God-like powers.[1]

In the Book of Genesis a constantly recurring phrase is—"God said," "God said," "God said." He said, and the thing which he said was done. Nothing whatever is said about the method by which the thing was done. No attention is paid to processes. All of that is left open. We can fill in the gaps as best we may. The evolutionist comes and offers to fill in the gaps. He says that the thing was done by a process of development. Things came to be what they are by a long process of unfolding. There is no contradiction between Genesis and evolution. At this point the doctrine of evolution supplies something which the Book of Genesis omits. Some persons feel that evolution is atheistic, but in thinking this they are mistaken. To be sure, a man may be an atheist and hold the doctrine of evolution, but he is not an atheist because of the doctrine. Henry Drummond was not an atheist, but he was a confirmed believer in evolution. There are many atheists who are evolutionists and many evolutionists believe in God—a personal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrine of evolution does not render God unnecessary. If you want to account for the process of evolution, then you must fall back on God. It is not enough to say the universe evolved. I want to know why it evolved—

[1]Millikan, Robert Andrews. *Science and Life*, pp. 86-90. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

what made it evolve? The only answer which satisfies my mind is God. It is not enough to say, "The universe climbs." I want to know why it climbs—what makes it climb? The only answer, I think, is God. Why did man come out of this process? He could not have come out of it had he not been in it; and he could not have been in it unless somebody put him in it. Who put him in it? Who could have put him in it but God?[2]

The really searching question, of course, has to do not with the solid saints who will hold to the religious verities, whatever comes and whatever goes. It is the new generation, to whom evolution is the very framework of all knowledge, of whom we must think. Believers in evolution they must be if their whole intellectual integrity is not to be shattered. Believers in the Christian religion many of them—most of them, we trust—would like to be. Are we able to help them? Have we a vital word in an hour which, for them, is a time of intellectual crisis? There are many of us who believe that at this very point Christianity meets one of its greatest and one of its happiest opportunities.

The young men and women who are coming in such amazing numbers from our institutions of learning have a knowledge and an understanding of the whole biological process which would have been a little disconcerting to their fathers and entirely astounding to their grandfathers. They have watched the emergence of vegetable and animal life from the water in the great adventure of living on the land. They have watched the vast and varied struggle of life up to man and through all the stages of civilization, and they are ready to

[2]Jefferson, Charles E. *Five Present-Day Controversies*, p. 62. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

ask, "What is back of it all, and whither does it lead?" They are ready to hear the great reply: "God is back of it all, and its goal is revealed in the stainless and glowing and radiantly self-forgetful personality of Jesus Christ." When once they have followed the long and dramatic story, the great epic of life upon this planet, seeing in every stage the presence and the activity of the invisible God, a new sacredness and a new glory come to all of life. And when they have seen emerging at the very heart of this tale of struggle and survival the mighty and glorious personality of Jesus Christ, when they have seen that everything else was on the way to him, and that everything is still on the way to the achievement of his kingdom, religion ceases to be an incidental part of life; it becomes the defining meaning of the biological process itself.[3]

There are all shades of belief among theistic evolutionists, according to the hold that the hypothesis has upon them, according to the religious momentum they acquired before they adopted it, and according to the extent to which they applied it. . . . Some put the beginning of life at twenty-five million years ago; some, like Darwin, put it two hundred million years ago; others add all the ciphers that they have to spare. . . . Their far-away God does not invite prayer or give the comforting assurance of their presence. . . . What coercive power has the sense of responsibility if it must be strained through the blood of all animal life, which, according to the evolutionist, forms man's ancestry? There is no place in evolution for the cry of the penitent soul; it knows no such transformation as being born

[3]Hough, Lynn Harold. Sermon: "Darwin, Evolution, and Christianity," *Christian Work*, October 25, 1925. Used by permission.

again or having sins forgiven. As Romanese confessed, even when an agnostic, it substitutes the "lonely mystery of existence" for the "hallowed glory" of the creed of orthodox Christianity. . . . The evolutionary hypothesis is the only thing that has seriously menaced religion since the birth of Christ, and it menaces all other religions, as well as the Christian religion, and civilization as well as religion—at least this is the conviction of a multitude who regard belief in God as the most fundamental of all beliefs and see in Christ the hope of the future.[4]

Evolution provides us, for one thing, with a nobler conception of God. Think, first of all, of a God who dwells for unimaginable aeons in a kind of splendid isolation—a God without a world. One day, about four thousand years ago, he decided to create a world and did create one in one hundred and forty-four hours, after which he rested twenty-four hours. Then, from his elevated position above the world, he began to direct the world's affairs, interfering from time to time with its orderly processes in order to work a "miracle." A somewhat capricious God; a God, moreover, who, being thought of as dwelling "up there," could only with extreme difficulty be thought of as present everywhere.

With this conception of God, compare the conception made possible by the discovery of evolution. God has never dwelt in isolation. He has always created. The very necessity of his being has obliged him to create. Nor does God dwell somewhere above the world. He is as certainly in the world as a man is in his body—and as certainly more than the world as a man is more

[4]Bryan, William Jennings. *The Forum*, vol. 70, p. 1678. Used by permission.

than his body. He is, therefore, not far away from any one of us; in him, quite literally, we live and move and have our being. And yet, he is more than we ourselves —more, far more, than the sum total of our humanity. And in what do we become aware of his existence? In occasional interferences with the laws of nature? No! In the universal order of the world; in the beauty and mystery of life; in the discovery of truth and the achievement of goodness; in the long, costly, sublime advance from mud to man, from savagery to civilization; above all, in Jesus.[5]

It does not help me much in the struggle for spiritual rather than animal supremacy in my life to be continually reminded that I am chained to an animal past. We do have an animal past but it is not the only conditioning factor. Rather would I keep reminding myself in the words of St. John, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Bertrand Russell says, "I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive." That is the trouble with a purely animal personality—it rots. There is nothing else it can do. But for those of us who look upon personality, or soul, as something vastly other than fleeting physical sensations, the worn-out body returning to earth is not the end of ego. Again I appeal to St. John rather than to Dorsey or Russell. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but . . . we shall be like him." The regal spirit of man simply refuses to capitulate to mechanistic cynicism.[6]

[5]Tittle, Ernest Fremont. Sermon: "Evolution and Religion." *The American Pulpit*, edited by Charles Clayton Morrison, p. 253. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

[6]Hislop, Edward. Sermon: "Animals or Sons of God." Used by permission of the author.

The human mind has been a late arrival in the house of life. It is small wonder that with so long a tenancy the animal mind within us has left so active and living a memory. Our physical and mental being, our nerves and muscles, our body and all its cells remember those millions of years, thrill to their memories, feel their primitive urge in all the emotional reactions of the civilized being. The raw, undisciplined physical instincts and passions do not often come out in the open. They are held on leash in the cellar of the subconscious, but we can hear the ape and the tiger growl. . . . Here is man's first struggle for dominion—a battle royal for dominion over the physical, animal appetites. For when the animal leaps upon the soul and tears with its tiger claws the spiritual faculties it leaves as woeful devastation in the house as did the escaped gorilla in Poe's gruesome story of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." There must be a battle on the stairway with the ghost coming up from the cellar, a battle such as Jesus pictured: "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man: and then he will spoil his house."

The past is heavy. Not merely our own past but the long, dim past of our racial inheritance. It drags. We gain nothing and lose much by disregarding its presence or its power. . . . But we do not need to bid the past loose its deadening grip by our own hesitant word. We are not left to a lonely struggle in the dark. If we wrestle with principalities and powers, there are principalities and powers that are on our side. We are heirs of all the ages, but above that and beyond it we are the heirs of Jesus Christ. In the battle of flesh and soul his energies may nerve our arm, for he, too, walks the halls of the ancestral home. His wisdom and power will teach

us to control, direct, and use our legacy from the animal.[7]

We cannot continue forever to deny that the whole trend of modern knowledge makes every day more certain. We cannot successfully appeal to our people to forget on Sunday what they know the rest of the week. To shut our eyes to the greatest, most far-reaching, most fruitful scientific idea of modern times, and to keep our mouths shut about it, as if it were a thing with which God had nothing to do, and which somehow throws Jesus Christ into the shadow, is no way to get our gospel home to the heart of this present time. We must, at the least, have a gospel that is not threatened with destruction every time anybody discovers something new about the world in which we live.

That is the least. That is the minimum, without which, in a little while, we cannot get a hearing for our gospel among educated people. But this minimum is never enough. If all we can do is to keep our gospel in spite of the advances of modern knowledge, we shall be merely holding our own, and that with increasing difficulty. That is never enough. If the gospel of Jesus Christ is true; if the great spiritual principles that underlie it are the same that God has woven back and forth into the structure of the universe at large, then every discovery that man can make about the world will not merely leave the gospel where it was but will put it that much ahead.[8]

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[7]Luccock, Halford E. *The Haunted House*, p. 17. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

[8]Patton, Carl S. Sermon: "The Gospel in the Present Age," *Best Sermons, 1926*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 41. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

However closely God is joined to his world, yet always there is a goodness that is more than what we see. It is at once the goal of the ages and the power that will work out this end. And the world that is and the better world that waits to be, both are utterly dependent upon this God. In these great affirmations we stand with our fathers, but in the thought of how this God works his ends and how he rules his world, we are children of the newer light. We see him as the God eternally creating, the God who is ever saying: "Behold, I make all things new." We see him as infinite power, not above his world, uttering some fiat of authority and letting his will be done by a word, but in his world as the energy that works in it all, so that we and all things live and move and have in him our being, whether it be the orbit of the electron, the sweep of countless suns, or the life of man's spirit.[9]

The idea of evolution has loomed large in the thought life of the past decade. The smoke of battle has hovered above the very word. It has implications which no honest, alert-minded preacher will avoid facing.

Two main thoughts stand out in the current discussions. The first is that the pulpit of to-day stands ready to face the truths latent in evolution, confident that religion has nothing to fear from them. The second is that certain types of evolutionary teaching aid and abet that materialism which does more than anything else to undermine the higher spiritual values. The preacher who discusses the first-mentioned of these two aspects of modern thought is not necessarily a protago-

[9]Rall, Harris Franklin. Address: "Faith in God in an Age of Science," *Christianity To-day*, edited by Harris Franklin Rall, p. 147. Used by permission of The Cokesbury Press.

nist of evolution. He is not anxious to wash his weapons in a Mediterranean of controversy. But the subject will not down. No young person having any intellectual contacts whatever can help hearing something about it. The Dayton case caused it to be bandied about by the press and thereby caused it to be discussed by learned and unlearned. The youth who takes a high-school course in biology is going to meet it face to face. It cannot be ignored by any student of philosophy. Even in literature it lifts its head again and again. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* echoes with the adumbrations of it. In his classes in composition the student, in the search of models of lucid expository prose, is sent to Huxley, most scientific of literary men and most literary of scientists. He may read Carlyle's pungent epigram: "I have no patience whatever with these gorilla damnifications of humanity." But perhaps the aphorism of the Chelsea prophet is not particularly convincing. The fact, at all events, remains that the young person of to-day is certain to hear the hypothesis of evolution discussed from many angles.

This means that certain responsibilities devolve upon the preacher. Of course he can get rid of the whole subject by sitting astride the gate and saying nothing. This, though, would be a case of palpable neglect of duty. Right here is the place where thousands of Americans of divers ages and degrees of intellectuality need light, and it is the business of the pulpit to give it to them. Mere fulmination against the hypothesis as a device of the prince of the power of darkness for destroying the souls of men gets nowhere. The preacher must make an honest effort to find the real truth and make it clear to others. The modern pulpit has, as a whole, done its part to measure up to its educational opportuni-

ties in making people see that no Christian has to choose between the findings of modern science and the verities of religious faith. The twentieth-century pulpit holds the view that the fact of evolution must be accepted. It realizes, nevertheless, that there are numerous theories, none of which tell the whole story, but it knows that the general inclusive truth of evolution itself has an unquestioned acceptance in the realm of scientific thought.

Yet there are many well-meaning, consecrated men and women who intellectually are groping in the fog. Their educational opportunities have been limited and they have done and are doing little or no reading. Moreover, some of them have been unfortunate in not having had the privilege of listening to the type of preaching which would clarify their intellectual difficulties. Such a situation is in itself a more potent argument for sermons elucidating the indubitable truth that there is not and there never has been a conflict between truth and truth, that there is no basic discrepancy between the truths of science and those of religion. It is indeed fortunate that this thought has been so frequently emphasized in the preaching of the contemporary pulpit.

If clear, intelligent, dynamic preaching can drive away the darkness of error, many shadows have been dissipated during the years since 1920. The preacher of to-day has endeavored to teach American Christendom that evolution is not intrinsically atheistic and godless. On the contrary, he has laid stress on the thought that the idea of an ever-progressing creative process instead of taking God out of his world gives him a place at the center.

Yet it must be admitted that all of the fears of the negative influence of the theory of evolution upon religious thought and life have not been groundless.

From the middle of the nineteenth century down to the present time there have been those who have in their thought life looked upon this biological theory as the basis of an undiluted materialism and have apotheosized it as a new truth which has emancipated forward-looking people not only from dogma but from religion itself. The world has suffered at the hands of unlettered clerics who, in their discussions of science, have exposed the most blatant ignorance. It has, however, on the other hand suffered at least as much at the hands of essentially unlettered scientists who have tried to reduce the universe to a few biological formulas. The stressing of man's kinship with the lower orders of creation has tended to cause some human beings to think of themselves as super animals rather than as men created in the image of God. This type of thought has developed a "cult of the seamy side." The psychology which looks upon man as the helpless product of mechanistic forces has its roots in evolutionary teaching. The vilest of ethics has been defended as the inevitable outgrowth of man's essential animality.

The type of thinking which regards man as merely a glorified beast is vitiating to all of the nobler principles of living. It is the most depressing and debasing fatalism of which the history of thought retains a record. In spite of its dehumanized logic, in spite of its representation of God as a monstrosity of relentless cruelty holding the sinner over the "pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or loathsome insect over the fire," there is something strong, virile, and impressive in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But the fatalism which looks upon man as the mere plaything of biological forces has most of the weakness of the older doctrine without its indubitable strength. There is a solemn impressive-

ness in the thought of a man's life being predetermined for him before the beginning of time by the Eternal Being who rules the universe, but there is nothing in the least inspiring in the idea that whether a human being is a saint or a scoundrel is simply a matter of the condition of his thyroid gland. This fatalism of the pseudo-scientist makes man nine-tenths animal and one-tenth human. And, of course, the one-tenth is kept in complete subjection by the overwhelming majority on the other side. The mechanistic teaching which in recent years has given men of wide educational opportunities a basis for the defending of vile ethics and animalistic living comes from an attempt to explain all things upon earth and in the heavens above the earth as the products of certain biological forces. Great as are the possibilities of the doctrine of evolution in the producing of a broader and deeper theology and a more genuine spirituality, in the hands of shallow, dim-visioned, lop-sided protagonists of an ill-balanced science it can be, and has been, most productive of harm.

Naturally the alert preacher has been awake to this danger. There has been some tendency in the homiletics of the past three years to emphasize the primacy of the spiritual. An inclusive sermon on the general theme of evolution is a discourse bearing the caption "What Is Man?" by Ernest Fremont Tittle.[10] The central thought of this address is expressed in the questions, "Did God make man in his own image? Is there anything divine in humanity?" The preacher takes the position that even if man is, as Walt Whitman expresses it, "stuccoed all over with quadrupeds," stigmata of his origin, he bears nevertheless in his spirit the image of God. He can be distinguished from the beasts of the fields in

[10] *The Religion of the Spirit*, p. 153.

many ways. He is the only animal who can think "I am." Likewise no other animal can think "I ought," or "I can." Even if man's origin is lowly, most evolutionists would say if asked as to his destiny: "Now he is the Son of God, and it does not yet appear what he shall be, but there is at least a reasonable hope that he will become one with the Eternal Father of his spirit."

The fundamental reality of the spiritual is the major thought of two other sermons. In his book *Christian Humanism* Russell Henry Stafford has a sermon entitled "In the Beginning,"[11] the text naturally being "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In *The Reformed Church Sermons*[12] there is a discourse by Paul J. Dundmore bearing the caption "In the Beginning, God," and based on the same text as Dr. Stafford's sermon. Both of the sermons accept the findings of modern science, but each is preached with the idea of controverting the current tendency to ignore the spiritual basis of life. Dr. Stafford, in discussing what is primarily a philosophical question, does not make any effort to avoid technical terminology. He tells us that the doctrine that the world is governed by "the holy will of an infinite Intelligence" is supported by four classical arguments known as the cosmological, teleological, ontological, and the moral arguments. He takes the position that although they do not prove severally or collectively that God is, they attest an overwhelming probability so sweeping that more credulity is required to doubt the truth which it supports than to accept it. But these rational considerations are not the chief arguments for belief in God. We achieve a faith which is more than a barren hypothesis by beholding

[11] P. 39.

[12] P. 199. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

God's love incarnated in the goodness of others and in the character of Jesus Christ. Having given expression to these great principles, Dr. Stafford proceeds to look for indications of God's presence in the world of things. Progress is an evidence of divine goodness. In the physical world evolution means changes for the better. There is, moreover, progress in the social relations of mankind. Another thought is that although human nature itself remains on the same level, throughout the generations, we are helped by our belief in immortality. Man's life upon this earth is an antechamber preparation for the life to come. Just as in a school fifth-grade classes are at the same level year after year, each group eventually passes on to the higher ground, so it is with man. Generation after generation has the same tendencies, the same weaknesses, the same temptations, but he attains his full height after he leaves this planet which is his temporary home. The conclusion of this sermon is that we are not "spiritual aliens intruded by accident upon a heartless realm of dead matter and blind force" but that we are at home in God's world now and forever.

The other sermon proceeds from the statement made by the writer of the text that God is the creator or author of the universe. Authorship implies personality. This earth is not a machine devised and set in motion by an inventor. It is the product of an author who lives in his work. But he lives beyond it as well as in it. God is not only immanent but transcendent. Man is the creature of God. If we are worthy he finds expression in our lives. Man is the crown of God's creation because in man there is the most complete expression of God himself. We need not fear the triumph of evil because God's creative activity is present in the world. Goodness is at the heart of the universe.

IX

THE ETHICS OF THE FLESH

BUT, you ask, does not my sex instinct demand a sex experience which the Christian standard labels "wrong"? Let us see. What is human nature? It is a threefold affair made up of body, mind, and spirit. For its fulfillment no one of these may make demands the satisfaction of which will violate the demands of either one of the other two. If it does it is against human nature. The ascetic who fled to his hut on the mountain to dwell in solitary confinement was wrong, because he outraged the body in the interests of the spirit. Likewise is the libertine wrong who, to give his body the experience its instincts crave, violates the spirit and outrages the mind. A sex experience contrary to the Christian standard of morality is against human nature, therefore, because it sacrifices the natural rights of mind and soul to the craving of the body. Any bodily satisfaction that robs you of peace of mind and integrity of spirit is distinctly against human nature. This the Christian standard is set to prevent. This an unchristian sex experience does. Testimony on that point is abundant. . . . One must never forget further that the Eden of a legitimate sex experience stands guarded by the flaming sword of disease which so inevitably overtakes him who practices promiscuity.[1]

[1]Krumbine, Miles H. *The Way to the Best*, p. 136. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

"Look not upon a woman to lust after her"—how well the Master of manhood understood the point of incidence of the dark powers that prey upon manhood. How well he understood that no man is safe until this tiger of his old jungle life has been overcome of his respect for personality as personality. . . . Of all the forces which drive men to destruction, the appetites and passions are the foulest and the mightiest. The appetite for drink and drugs leads an uncounted army of men and women in degrading slavery. Countless numbers reach premature graves. The rest live and die in degradation. Sexual lust lures and degrades or destroys so many that a presentation of the facts would cause panic in ethical and religious circles. The appalling records of social workers reveal the heart-breaking facts. It is history that in military warfare lust has destroyed more men than have died of bullets.[2]

A good deal of the present vogue of physical culture is absurd and mischievous body worship; the glorification of the human animal. I confess to being very tired of those pictures on periodical covers of male and female Samsons covered with huge, hard clots of superfluous and useless brawn. That sort of thing is pure and simple negation and arrest of the spiritual pilgrimage of man; and if this obsession of brawn and muscle goes on much longer, we shall soon be back in the fields eating grass. This is not to say that I condemn physical culture and athletics. On the contrary, I hold them to be part of the necessary discipline of the body in the interests of the soul; but their aim should not be muscular grossness, but health and grace of bodily carriage.

[2]Youtz, Herbert Alden. *The Supremacy of the Spiritual*, p. 79. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

It has been said that health is holiness; both words do indeed come to us from the same root; and both at bottom mean "wholeness." And certainly good health is, for those who can win and keep it, an article of holiness. Not indeed that it is an indispensable condition of holiness. Many people who have suffered much physical infirmity have achieved great spiritual beauty. There is a secret for turning our sicknesses and sufferings to the advantage of the soul. But for most people, good health is a condition of spiritual well-being; and by good health, I mean that state of the body in which it functions so normally, so effortlessly and so smoothly that it does not call any attention to itself.[3]

There is much truth in Tennyson's couplet in "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After."

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And reversion ever dragging evolution in the mud.

The lower call is forever vying with the higher. The downward tug is as persistent as the upward lift. The path of safety for discerning men against this besetment of reversion to type is indicated in the somewhat hackneyed illustration of Jason's famous ship *Argo* in "The Search for the Golden Fleece." It will be recalled that the astute explorer, realizing the peril of the song that came from the island of the sirens, took the precaution to have Orpheus on board his vessel, so that when Jason was exposed to the danger that had destroyed his predecessors, he could call upon the master musician to furnish more beautiful music than the sirens could produce. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the

[3]Roberts, Richard. *The Gospel at Corinth*, p. 121. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

upward calling," is the declaration of the triumphant apostle. To the man who is making the fight for character, this life policy of Paul is worthy of prayerful and persistent imitation. The safeguard against the encroachments of reversion is growth in the right direction. The most certain antidote to retrogression is definite progress toward the goal.[4]

The thing to note is that the wild horses of passion, given free rein, precipitate those whom they drag after them into dark destruction of all that gives personality intrinsic worth; while these same wild horses, harnessed to a stubborn will for righteousness, become tremendous instruments of good. Let no man make excuse for his crimes that his passions are strong; for no man ever achieved genuine virtue whose passions were not strong, but held in firm control.

Carnal appetites also assert themselves, however, in ways less noxious and disgusting than vice, but not less criminally inimical to the immortal nature of man. I am thinking now of the seductions of soft and easy living, the pleasures of the table and the armchair. Many a man who would scorn to pursue such a course as would land him in the gutter is rendered as void of spirituality as a vegetable and brought to an early grave by the eminently respectable and genial sins of overeating and padded inertia.[5]

We differ radically from cults which deny the existence of the disagreeable and painful. We have no sympathy with ascetics who urge voluntary infliction of

[4]Adair, Ward. *Vital Messages in Modern Books*, p. 92. Used by permission of The Association Press.

[5]Stafford, Russell Henry. *Christian Humanism*, p. 174. Used by permission of Willett, Clark and Colby.

suffering or submission to hardships as in themselves spiritually beneficial. Nor have we anything in common with the at present widespread feeling that everything unpleasant is to be avoided, that no cravings are to be repressed; that no irksome obligations are to be endured; this is crass paganism and the direct antithesis of losing one's self to find it. We rejoice in the advances of science and invention which render human life safer and healthier. But we cannot blind our eyes to the fact that civilization develops new diseases, and that progress in man's control of the universe is accompanied with new possibilities of peril. Danger and pain and irritation and death are apparently part of the order of things. They are not electives but required courses in the curriculum of life. They are to be faced open-eyed; their lessons mastered; and they are themselves to be turned by the grace of Christ to glorious gain both to ourselves and to others.[6]

We have no absolute right to do what we please with our bodies unless we please to do that with them which will honor God and make them the instrument of the Divine spirit. In the possession and use of our bodies we are partners with God, who gave them to us; in a partnership the joint consent of the partners is necessary for the decision of essential policies. The will of God surely does not sanction any actions that would impair or debauch our bodies. The body is described by the noble figure of a temple. Holy places must be kept for holy uses. We must use the temple for the worship of God; we must use the body for the accomplishment of God's will. The temple must be used reverently,

[6]Coffin, Henry Sloan. *What to Preach*, p. 96. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

because we expect to find God there. The body must be treated as reverently as if God also dwelt within it and hallowed it.[7]

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? What constitutes self-reliance in health? In what does backbone in this great field consist? It consists, first of all, in not being afraid of disease, in not talking about it, in not spreading illness; but rather in being a missionary of hopefulness and health. It means taking a pardonable pride in our effective rate; it means not being afraid to die, but being ashamed to be partly dead while we're alive. These bodies of ours are temples of the spirit, worthy of reverent safeguarding. To promote our own and other people's health is therefore an act of reverence. Whoever is keen for the well-being of his community, who rejoices in mental and physical alertness, who regards his health as a ready servant of noble causes, such a one is developing hygienic backbone.[8]

When you bump into a man of power, physically, intellectually, or morally, you know at once that you are up against something. "Here is stamina," you say to yourself. Now that sense of power can be cultivated and developed like any other live thing. It grows when conditions are right. It may add cubits to its stature in the course of four years like a tree planted by a river of water. Theodore Roosevelt became one of the most forceful men of his generation, yet he was a puny child —in his early life he was never quite up to the mark physically. He became a man of power by making a

[7]Davis, Ozora S. *Preaching the Social Gospel*, p. 85. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

[8]Drury, Samuel S. *Backbone*, p. 177. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

business of it as soon as he was old enough to think. He may have had unusual capacity for growth—I think that he had—but his stamina, physical and intellectual, political and moral, came by his insistent use of the right means. He did not try to live by bread and games alone—he lived by all the great words which proceed out of the mind of God—food, clothing, shelter, exercise, naturally, also faith, hope, love, courage, aspiration, high resolve! By these men live and grow in power.[9]

Our generation is characterized by a high degree of frankness in the recognition of the facts of sex. Magazine articles dealing with its psychological and sociological implications arouse no especial comment. Material which once would have caused blushes and confusion is now as a matter of course discussed in the presence of audiences composed of both sexes. Although modern psychology may try to explain too many human characteristics as the products of sex life, it has enabled us to understand that the so-called "sex problem" has ramifications of which we once never dreamed. This has resulted in clearer thinking and plainer speaking.

Another cause of the same tendency has been the fact that we are an outspoken generation. Whatever our weaknesses we, as a rule, stand ready to face the truths of life no matter how disagreeable they may be. We are less inhibited by artificial conventionalities than were our parents and grandparents. More of us are trained in biology. Therefore we recognize that biological material is intrinsically as clean as that of chemistry and that it is just as proper a subject of discussion. The same

[9]Brown, Charles R. *Where Do You Live?*, p. 49. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

study has also impressed upon us the need of a considerable outspokenness in regard to matters of such vital concern in the normal human life. Any social worker can tell of hundreds of young people who have become tragedies on account of the lack of the right information given in the right way. It is no longer necessary to present arguments in behalf of the necessity of sex instruction. Every teacher and social worker knows that it is an absolute necessity.

The question, then, naturally arises as to what part the pulpit should take in this education. Most people who think the problem through will agree that the pulpit is not the place for biological lectures. Such lectures are, of course, not to be criticized. There are, though, two reasons why they are not material for discussion in the pulpit. One of these is the palpable fact that the preacher is not equipped to give them and the other is that the demands of the pulpit are sufficiently heavy without the preacher trespassing into other fields. But there are aspects of the sex question upon which the pulpit should express itself with clarity and positiveness. The preacher who does his whole duty is a teacher of practical ethics. If he passes over as important a subject as sex he is making a signal failure in this capacity.

The very fact that so much is being said in regard to sex is one reason that almost compels the preacher to deal with the problem. Sex must be discussed in the light of Christian teaching, and if the man of the pulpit does not do this, it will not be done. The biologist has done his part and done it well. The sociologist has also exerted a positive influence for decent ideals and clean living. Possibly not as much can be said for the psychologist. Especially is this true of the brethren of the

futuristic school. After one reads for a few hours in the effusions of Freud and his colaborers he gets the impression that the world is a barnyard and that human beings are but glorified beasts whose chief function is to propagate their kind, and that they are so engrossed in the fulfilling of this function that they have neither time nor inclination to think about anything else. It is precisely on account of the dissemination of such pestilential piffle that the preacher needs to exercise his function as a teacher of practical ethics.

There never has been a time from the days of the Church Fathers down to the present when preachers have not had something to say upon this subject. John Knox made himself an object of scorn and fear in the court of Mary Stuart by his militant stand for ethical decencies. Robert South, anti-Puritan though he was, in the corrupt Restoration period of English history, in denunciation of physical license spoke words which would make good preaching to-day. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards both made enemies for themselves by their insistence on high standards of sex morality. Lyman Beecher most certainly did not pass over unnoticed this important phase of Christian ethics.

A glance at what the preachers of earlier days had to say on such a subject causes us to analyze what we can find in regard to the attention given it by the modern pulpit. My first personal impression is that in approximately forty years of churchgoing I have not heard ten minutes' discussion of this subject, with the exception of two highly sensational addresses delivered by a peripatetic evangelist at Sunday afternoon meetings for "men only." An analysis of printed material is slightly more encouraging. Nevertheless, there are indications that the homiletical possibilities of this sub-

ject, especially for Sunday evening addresses to young people, are exceptional and that the amount of material dealing with it is thus far very meager. I have before me a sermon entitled "Christianity and Sex"[10] which can be regarded as a model discussion of this subject. It is preached from two texts: John x:10. "I came that they might have life and may have it more abundantly." I Corinthians vi:20. "Glorify God therefore in your body."

Dr. Krumbine begins by contrasting the truth that "Jesus had a great deal to say about sex" with the lack of boldness which has characterized the Church in dealing with sex morality. He quotes an eminent British clergyman as saying: "The evils that come through the mismanagement of sex have beaten every civilization up to the present." This suggests the arresting question, "Will they beat ours?" The situation in modern America is alarming. "Our social life is red with moral anarchy; our current literature wallows in mire." Chastity is held up to ridicule by men and women who pose as leaders of thought. Self-expression is lauded as the epitome of strong character. Self-control is excoriated as the relic of a neurotic Puritanism. The preacher first makes it clear that in his plea for a Christianized sex life he is not following the traditional idea of one standard for men and another for women. The rest of the sermon is outlined as follows: (1) The sex instinct is a fact of life which must be faced. To ignore it is not Christian. A lack of sex education has been responsible for many a tragedy. (2) There is to the Christian one standard for sex morality which is "chastity before marriage and fidelity and self-control after marriage. These are the

[10]Krumbine, Miles H. *The Way to the Best*, p. 129.

only mark of manhood and womanhood redeemed by Christ." (3) Moral law is not against human nature. The law of human personality demands not license but restraint. The age-old idea that the Christian standard of sex morality is against human nature is a deep-seated superstition. (4) In a wholesome life the energy which threatens to spoil one must find other channels for fulfillment. Man's ultimate goals are spiritual. It is a fact of science that the energy of the sex instinct can be transformed so as to stimulate the higher parts of the mind, to give reality to these values.

But the title of this chapter is "The Ethics of the Flesh." Consequently a discussion of the attitude of the pulpit toward sex and its problems does not cover the entire field. Man's whole bodily life is a matter of concern in the working out of the principles of Christian ethics. A great unclerical preacher of the nineteenth century, Robert Browning, more than once gave place in his poetry to the joy of physical well-being. He makes Saul say:

Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joy of living! the leaping from rock to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver-shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair,
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draft of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy:

It is the same poet who puts into the mouth of Rabbi Ben Ezra the words:

All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!

The day of mortifying the flesh is over. Few would now deny that bodily health promotes spiritual vigor. The Y. M. C. A. has been a potent factor in the promoting of what Charles Kingsley called "muscular Christianity." Back in my own college days in the first decade of the present century the favorite subject for Y. M. C. A. addresses were "The Triangular Man," "The Four-square Man," and "The All-round Man." Some of us could never quite see how the same man could be triangular, square, and round, but we never dared to doubt that our inability to understand this geometrical problem was due to our own limited capacity for the comprehension of mathematics. "Muscular Christianity" is all right, provided that it does not emphasize too much the muscular at the expense of the intellectual and the spiritual. Bodily ethics as a topic for pulpit discussion is not to be minimized.

Dr. Russell H. Stafford has a sermon entitled "Hunger"[11] which discusses the ethics of the flesh from

[11] *Christian Humanism*, p. 170.

a Christian point of view. The fundamental idea of the discourse is that the body must not be allowed to usurp ascendency over the spirit. This may be done by allowing the desires of the flesh at their lowest level to have dominance, but just as effectively can it be done in more insidious ways. Three of these ways of titillating the nerves are brazen immodesty, sensational and erotic journalism, and the insatiable appetite for amusement.[12] To withstand such temptations as Jesus withstood them we must have a renewed appreciation of our spiritual energies themselves and a fresh appraisal of the body. The flesh must be kept in subjection. "We must use it instead of being used by it."

Another outstanding sermon upon this theme which should not go unmentioned bears the arresting caption "Brother Ass."[13] Here the texts are: I Cor. vi:19. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. . . ?" I Cor. ix:27. "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage. . . ." The title of the sermon is based on the custom of St. Francis of Assisi of calling his body "Brother Ass," and as he lay dying he is reported to have said, "I have been too hard on Brother Ass." Dr. Roberts says that in these words the man of Assisi voices the paradox of the traditional Christian attitude toward the body, in that it expresses both reverence and contempt. "The body is both friend and enemy. It is at the same time the temple of the Holy Ghost and the anteroom of hell." The first text of the sermon gives expression to the one attitude and the second to the other.

The predominant attitude of the Church of the Middle

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[12]. Stafford, *Christian Humanism*, p. 170.

[13]Roberts, Richard. *The Gospel at Corinth*, p. 116. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

Ages toward the body was one of contempt. Asceticism was never characterized by any reverence of the physical. It believed in mortification of the flesh. But such a view is obviously erroneous. We cannot proceed on the assumption that there is a natural enmity between the soul and the body. What, then, is the relation between them? With the body we deal with the things that are seen; with the soul we deal with the things that are unseen. We live in a world of time, space, and things; at the same time we must "establish increasing relations with the unseen." The human body is the earthly house of this tabernacle. In it the spiritual lodges. It is not an end in itself, but it must not be treated with scorn. Health and holiness come from the same Anglo-Saxon root. For most people good health is a condition of spiritual well-being. Above all else the body must be subjected to moral discipline. Man must not yield to "the pull of the animal," "the call of the wild." A carnal mind makes an animalized body. And the converse of this proposition is just as true; a clean body is the result of a clean mind. The soul is not made for the body, but the body for the soul. It exists for the use and indwelling of God.

Sermons dealing with this subject are scarcer than in any other field of homiletical thought discussed in this volume. But these three excellent discourses by Krumbine, Stafford, and Roberts are evidence of its high possibilities. On the other hand, any student of American life knows full well that in spite of many evidences of physical improvement on the part of the American people, preaching on these subjects is needed. But one should look first at the credit side. The fact that the average death rate has decreased from 17.6 per thousand in 1901 to 11.6 in 1921 is encouraging. Much of this

decrease is undoubtedly due to more ethical and hygienic habits of life. In the teaching of the laws of health, the schools of to-day are functioning much more effectively than those of a generation ago. Where children were once compelled to commit the names of bones and perform other feats of memory, they are now taught how to take care of themselves. Such teaching is very often accompanied by well-planned calisthenics which have given vigor and skill to children who would otherwise have become weak and awkward men and women. Athletics must also be given credit for the stimulation of ideals which make for bodily strength and endurance. The schools deserve high commendation for what progress has been made in the increases of physical efficiency during the past twenty-five years. Higher medical standards have also been factors in health improvement. Without a doubt greater progress has been made in surgery during the last sixty years than in all the preceding years of human history. Then, too, improved conditions of living and sanitation must be remembered as changes that have been responsible for much progress. Sometimes the dear old oaken bucket was a veritable disease spreader. Many an apparently crystal-pure spring was full of typhoid germs. Within the memory of men and women not yet past life's meridian, quarantine was almost unknown. Now everywhere, except in the most belated regions, it is taken as a matter of course. Most certainly these changes have not been without results in physical improvement.

But there is another side of the picture. If the most casual observer would seat himself in the lobby of a large hotel and watch the passing crowds he could not help noticing that many of them bear the marks of a lack of physical fitness, apparently produced in most

instances by self-indulgence. Other evidence in this regard can be obtained in a street car as the population of a great city crowd to the stores and offices and factories to take up their labors for another day. Here it is very apparent that the number of under-nourished, tired-looking, spiritless men and women is alarmingly large. This "common sense" method of arriving at conclusions may not appeal to the sophomoric mind just turned out by the graduate school, but it is reënforced by the results of the physical tests made of the young manhood of America during the World War, when the proportion of those measuring up to a satisfactory standard of physical efficiency was below the expectations of the most pessimistic. Worse than this, any physician or social worker can tell of how thousands of the men and women of civilized society are suffering from social diseases which endanger both innocent and guilty and vitiate the strength of a people. To say that the physical life of the American people is not yet entirely Christianized is to express the truth with considerable mildness. It follows from this that if we take for granted that spirituality is impeded by physical weakness, this problem is one which the Church cannot completely sidestep.

Henry Sloane Coffin makes this cogent observation:[14] "It is a serious reflection on the Church that those brought up in its congregation often hear for the first time in their lives from these questionable movements (Christian Science and the Cults) how to use religion to cope with the ills of life." There is, in connection with these phases of life, an ample supply of material for sermons that are practical, ethical, and deeply spiritual. There is a unity of mind and body. Fatigue weakens attention and lessens self-control, which lies at the basis

[14] *What to Preach*, p. 93. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

of all character. Proper bodily conditions can mightily improve both intellectual and moral efficiency. Dr. Theodore Munger once spoke to an audience of theological students on "Health, Vitality, and Inspiration." In the America of our day the tendency is to be everlastingly upon the go. We have learned to labor but not to wait. As a result, neurasthenia is a peculiarly American disease. And one of the most pitiable aspects of this tragedy is that we devitalize ourselves frittering away our time in nothingness. One day a college professor addressed a jaded-looking class in these words: "Young people, you look as though you spent twice as much time studying as you should." The somnolent group perceptibly brightened up. Then the professor added, "But you recite as though you spent half enough time at your studies." Probably both statements were true. It is easy to be busy doing nothing. The consequence is physical depletion. This is productive of frazzled nerves, a snappy temper, and a flaccid personality. In the mastery of the arts of life the development of a physical and mental hygiene is an absolute necessity.

In this regard mention should be made of a book published in 1925 by Alexander B. McCleod. Its title is *Mental Hygiene Taught by Jesus* and it contains material highly suggestive of some intensely practical sermons. Among its chapter headings are the following: "The Suggestiveness of Jesus," "The Prolonging of Mental Plasticity," "Adjusting Studies and Tasks to Life," "The Hygiene of Encouragement," "Responsibility and Service," and "Religion and Mental Hygiene." The reader of this book cannot help but being impressed, if the thought has not occurred to him before, that there is more encouragement and inspiration in the teaching

of Jesus than could be obtained from some hundreds of M. Coué's. Dr. Coffin[15] suggests a possible series of sermons on "Religion and Healthy Living" with the following sermon titles: "Faith and Fatigue," "Faith and Nervousness," "Faith and Worry," "Faith and Pain," "Faith and Emergencies," "Faith and Weakness," and "Faith and the Inevitable." These titles but evidence the rich possibilities for human helpfulness which might result from the development of this and allied fields of homiletical thought.

[15] *What to Preach*, p. 93. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

X

HOMILETICAL TEACHING IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ONCE more we can have our old war systems with their appalling modern developments, or we can have Christianity, but we cannot permanently have both. They worship irreconcilable gods.

I need not, and I must not, press the analysis further. Two generations ago one of our great statesmen, Charles Sumner, said, "Not that I love country less, but humanity more, do I now and here plead the cause of a higher and truer patriotism. I cannot forget that we are men by a more sacred bond than we are citizens—that we are children of a common Father more than we are Americans." Shall not each one of us here pray for his own country, as I pray earnestly for mine, that that spirit may come into the ascendency? Christianity essentially involves it.

. . . . . .

We work in many ways for the same end—a world organized for peace. Never was an end better worth working for. The alternative is the most appalling catastrophe mankind has ever faced. Like gravitation in the physical realm, the law of the Lord in the moral realm bends for no man and no nation: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."[1]

[1]Fosdick, Harry E. Sermon: "Christianity and War," *Best Sermons, 1926*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, pp. 16, 18. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

That the Church of Jesus Christ, which has for its goal the winning of the world through persuasion and love, should have been committed for more than sixteen hundred years to approval of war, constitutes one of the tragedies of history. With the modern development of science, this situation cannot endure. To-morrow, there will be Christian civilization according to the principles of Jesus or self-destruction through war. The present, happily, is not without its promising outlook. In every civilized country the Christian Church has to-day an opportunity to lift its message from the fields of authority and tradition and to plant it in the fertile soil of experience. Federations of Churches, the Church Peace Union, and similar organizations by international conferences and discussions are implanting the concept of Christian Brotherhood and are gradually reversing the historic attitude of the Church to war. A vital Christian consciousness on this point is imperative. Let us support whole-heartedly those political leaders of our own and other nations who are ceaselessly laboring to make of war a crime against humanity and to categorize it with other accidents of moral disease.[2]

It is considered as unlikely that civilization can ever endure on the basis of Tolstoy's non-resistance doctrine. Personally I do not accept that interpretation of the words of Jesus which teaches an absolute and unqualified non-resistance. If a bandit attempted to take the life of a little girl, non-resistance might kill the girl by sparing the bandit. We have arrived at a state of society where force is no longer the law by which individual

[2]Sunday, William F. Sermon: "Christ and War," *American Lutheran Preaching*, edited by Miles H. Krumbine, p. 218. Used by permission of Harper and Brothers.

differences are settled. The *code duello* has been abrogated, at least on this side of the water. But civilization does still use force against the outlaw, as in the case of the policeman who conquers the bandit and saves the girl. And we must come to this status among nations. Force must no longer be the means of settlement of differences between nations under law. Its only justifiable use is by nations collectively against the outlaw. In some way the world must organize for peace and bring to bear on the outlaw first the force of world sentiment, and then the force of economic boycott, with the use of collective police powers only as a last resort. I am profoundly convinced that the first two forces would in most cases prove sufficient. I care not under what form the nations band together, nor what name is used, nor whose glory will be heightened or lessened, nor which party may gain advantage. In one way or another the world must organize for peace, or civilization is doomed."[3]

But I do not look forward to a superstate. That would be a return toward man organizations of the early world empires. Rather do I hope for and confidently expect a new fellowship among the nations. This fellowship shall sacrifice and obliterate none of the individual *Kultur*, ideals, or traditions of the separate nations but rather cherish and develop them, and unite them in the common weal and service of all, in which none shall be called to surrender, give up, any of the things it counts precious or are of any real value, but contribute them to the common fund of the commonwealth. The best and most loyal citizen of any city is he who loves

[3]Wishart, Charles F. *The God of the Unexpected*, p. 160. Used by permission of The College of Wooster Press.

and cultivates most diligently his own home and family life, indeed loves and cultivates them after such a fashion that they never feel the touch of the law or suffer invasion by the police power of the community. He has the largest stake in the community and will be most zealous and devoted to its maintenance and defense. So I look forward to a fellowship of the nations in which each people which cherishes and cultivates most earnestly its own real national spirit, its own true patriotism, its own best values shall be at the same time and for that very reason the most loyal and zealous member of the common society and family of humanity.[4]

We believe our soldiers never ought to have had to die any more than that firemen ought to have been killed. We hate war. We have got to build a fireproof world even if to do it we have to change the elementary materials out of which the world is built, even if we have to change the inmost hearts of men. But shame on us, if while we are busy at that we forget the dutifulness, the idealism, the courage, the pain, the sacrifice, of our patriot dead.[5]

Further, it is the manifest will of God, if it is possible for man to read the Eternal Will in the facts and events of history—as the seers of old read the revelation of God in the tumults of their times—that humanity shall have some kind of world organization and understanding, by whatever name it may be called. Distance is annihilated; the ends of the earth are tied together; it will soon be possible to speak to the whole world by

[4]Williams, Charles D. *The Gospel of Fellowship*, p. 110. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

[5]Richards, James Austin. *The Sufficiency of Jesus*, p. 157. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

radio. The interweaving and intercommunication of humanity is a fact. Drawn together, driven together, we must organize to live together, whether we like it or not. The earth has become a neighborhood, and it must learn neighborliness. It is not impossible; it is inevitable. Not even America can forever resist the manifest destiny of humanity. The idea that war can end war is an absurdity on the face of it. As well try to put out fire with fire. Only by conference, by coöperation, by submitting differences to a High Court of the World can they be settled in a civilized manner.[6]

This is not to be understood as merely a negative aloofness from war. We must take a very positive position. We must outlaw war. That is certain. For if private and individual murder is wrong, public and national murder is wrong also. And just as private murder has been outlawed, just as the duel is now relegated to the discarded customs of an outgrown past, even so must we now go on to declare war a criminal and an outlaw. And we must do more than this. As Christians and as patriotic citizens, we must do all we can do to remove the causes of war. We must cast off the provincial mind and become citizens of the world. We must labor toward a mutual understanding between all races and all nations. We must religiously give ourselves to the cultivation of interracial and international good will. We must come to see that America cannot stand apart from the rest of the world in times of peace any more than she did in the time of war. We should recognize that the League of Nations is a going concern and should come in at the front door and not attempt to

[6]Newton, Joseph Fort. Sermon: "The Ordeal of Peace," *The Ambassador*, November, 1925. Used by permission.

slip in at the back door. We should throw our influence solidly behind the effort to establish a world court for the settlement of international difficulties. We should call upon all men of good will everywhere to arise for the salvation of the world.[7]

Waste of muscle, waste of brain,
Waste of patience, waste of pain,
Waste of manhood, waste of health,
Waste of beauty, waste of wealth,
Waste of blood, waste of tears,
Waste of youth's most precious years,
Waste of ways the saints have trod,
Waste of glory, waste of God—
War.

To avert such waste, a waste even unto death, will require not only international machinery and an international mind, but an international heart. The prevention of war requires a moral imperative which shall be decisive. It requires a spirit of international democracy, the well-being of all nations secured by a spirit of fraternalism. The prevention of war is to-day the great moral problem of the world. All other problems depend ultimately for solution upon the solution of the war problem. No matter how far we get in solving other national or international problems, everything may be suddenly brought to naught by the outbreak of war. That being the case, moral preparedness is the supreme necessity.[8]

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[7]Mouzon, Edwin Dubose. *The Program of Jesus*, p. 211. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

[8]Simons, Minot. Sermon: "Moral Preparedness," *Week-day Sermons in King's Chapel*, edited by Harold E. B. Speight, p. 121. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

The fourth god who will have to be buried in the near future is the god of narrow nationalism. This is the old tribal god of the centuries. He has taught the people of every nation that the people of other nations are inferior and of a lower order of creation as compared with the people of his own nation. He originated such terms as "Gentile" and "Barbarian" and all the other egotistical titles in the nationalistic category. He writes songs like "*Deutschland über Alles*" and he tries to make his followers believe that, because they are themselves, therefore they ought to be "*über*" everybody else. The apostle Paul had this god in mind when he said, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians," and again, "In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free." Christianity, from the beginning, was opposed to the whole spirit of narrow nationalism. It always considered humanity as a whole, never one particular tribe or class or nation. This world would have been spared much misery if it had accepted such an ideal. Instead of doing this, however, it gradually developed a situation of international anarchy which has now reached a point where its further continuance will mean little short of annihilation for the human species.[9]

Whatever the sins of omission of the American pulpit, our preachers cannot with the slightest degree of justice be accused of being derelict in regard to making an honest effort to teach the value of the application of the principles of Jesus to international affairs. Although it is possible to find sermons on such subjects in the extant homiletical writings of some of the preachers of the

[9]Kershner, Frederick D. *Sermons for Special Days*, p. 183. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

nineteenth century, the idea of international relations as a sermonic basis is something relatively new under the sun. In all probability more sermons have been preached on the issues of world politics during the past ten years than during all of the preceding years of the history of the American pulpit.

The World War, together with the problems arising from it, has been the primary cause of this welter of homiletical addresses dealing with the various aspects of international problems. In August, 1914, when Europe became a seething caldron of fratricidal hatreds the American preacher was stunned. Then as such evidence as he could get in regard to the responsibility for the war came filtering across the Atlantic he began to do some thinking and in most instances some talking. When Germany took the attitude that a treaty was but "a scrap of paper" and marched ruthlessly through Belgium, his passion for human rights fired him with indignation. But he still hoped and believed that the war would be short in duration and that America would not become involved in it. Very frequently during the early days of the conflict, sermons on peace were provided as pabulum for congregations in all parts of these United States. As the war became larger in its proportions and the animosities burned more fiercely, the militant spirit in America grew more dominant. Then pulpits naturally reflected the popular feeling. When the United States entered the war, the Church supported it with all possible earnestness. Preachers everywhere used their platforms in explaining the issues of the strife and developing the type of morale without which no war can be won.

As a rule, they believed in President Wilson's nobly phrased idealism and looked upon the World War as a

"war to end war." Many of them thought that they saw through the smoke of the gigantic battles the morning twilight of a new and glorious day. It took most of them a long time to understand the course of events as they saw the making of a treaty which, in some of its provisions, was medieval and reactionary. Alongside of this, those of discrimination could not but see that at home their own country was passing through a period of disillusionment and of cynicism. A spirit of "hard-boiled" matter-of-factness seemed to be the prevailing characteristic of the times. The Peace Treaty became the football of partisan politics. The League of Nations, the most tangible expression of the idealism which had inspired men to fight and die, was organized while America "sat by the fire warming her hands." A few ministers were such violent partisans that they looked at the problems of binding up the wounds which the war had made from one side or the other of the fence of party politics. Most of them, however, were protagonists of a Christian peace and a league to enforce it. And there were naturally divers opinions as to ways and means. But the pulpit stood almost unanimously for the practice of Christian principles in the post-war dealings of nation with nation.

One outstanding characteristic which has manifested itself in the pulpit is a feeling that such a world tragedy must "never happen again." As a result there have been thousands of sermons preached laying stress upon the necessity of nations so managing their affairs as to avoid the sacrifice of youth upon the field of carnage. Many of these sermons come from the hearts of men who spent years in the midst of the unspeakable horrors of war. Some take the uncompromising position that under no circumstances will they ever again aid and abet war.

Some regard patriotism as a vice rather than a virtue. But many of them would not travel this distance. While they look upon war as the direst of calamities and a tragedy which must be wiped from the book of humanity, they are not ready to regard the love of country as the relic of a darkened age and they are not absolutely sure that there have not been times when to take up the weapons of war has been the only honorable course open for a nation. Yet preachers of varying shades of opinion have, especially in the past years, rendered splendid service in showing that race prejudice, provincial ignorance, saber-rattling chauvinism, and inflated preparedness are all contrary to the teachings of the Founder of the Christian religion.

Dr. Harry E. Fosdick has become a militant and uncompromising warrior against war. In sermon after sermon he has declared his unmitigated and unrelenting opposition to it in every form. This spirit of militant pacifism has been echoed from hundreds of other pulpits. In 1926 he preached a sermon[10] in the Cathedral at Geneva in the League of Nations Assembly Service in which in poignant, scathing, thought-inspiring, soul-stirring words, which had the ring of the world-shaking message of prophets of ancient Israel reincarnated in the modern world, he denounced war as anachronistic, pagan, barbaric, and sub-human, as the direct antithesis of Christianity. He took the position that all of the traditional arguments for war are fallacious. To claim that it protects the weak is a grim jest. Ten million known dead soldiers; 13,000,000 dead civilians; 20,000,000 wounded; 3,000,000 prisoners; 9,000,000 war orphans; 5,000,000 war widows; 10,000,000 refugees.

[10]Sermon: "Christianity and War," *Best Sermons, 1926*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 3.

"The conviction grows clear in increasing multitudes that modern war is no war to protect the weak." Violence defeats itself. "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." War is utterly and irremediably unchristian. In another sermon entitled "Christianity's Supreme Rival"[11] he declares that the basic cause of war is a "perverted dogma of nationalism" which, he says, conflicts with the principles of Jesus in three ways:

I. It makes genuine monotheism impossible. It causes men to worship, not God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, but tribal gods of war time. War sets us praying each to the deity of his own country for the blood of his enemies.

II. The dogma of nationalism enslaves the Christian conscience. It has at its base the idea "My Country, right or wrong." Right and wrong, God and conscience are bent to nationalism. The king can do no wrong; neither can the republic.

III. This dogma reduces Christianity to a harmless myth and keeps it from being a real program of action. It causes professed Christians to drop bombs on each other's villages, murder each other's mothers and babies, starve each other by millions, poison each other with gas, and slaughter each other with pestilences.

Nationalism at best is beautiful. It is a unifying force in the world. "It takes diverse multitudes and makes them one, weaving America like Joseph's coat of many colors and yet unified."

Internationalism and world peace have been discussed so frequently that the allied topics have been treated from almost every conceivable point of view. The subject of peace is one that tempts the empty-

[11] *Christian Century*, January 19, 1928. Used by permission.

headed speaker to sophomoric rhetorical gyrations. Naturally, examples of this type of oratory have not been lacking. It is also true that in a day when a subject is popular it becomes the victim of the platform efforts of those who know little about it. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the pulpit of the last decade has made a truly noble contribution to the discussions of international affairs. Even if certain types of speakers have lowered the average somewhat, others of signal penetration and insight have made addresses which have more than offset the shallowness of the rhetoricians. With a few exceptions the preachers have not discussed political intricacies. This they have wisely left to experts in the field of statecraft. They have, for the most part, devoted their ability and their energy to the statement of Christian ideals as they can, and should, be applied to international affairs.

Occasionally, though, a preacher who has made a detailed study of a given aspect does make bold to discuss this phase of the matter. And this is most emphatically not objectionable. As long as a man knows what he is talking about no one can, with justice, challenge his right to speak. Dr. Charles C. Morrison of the *Christian Century* has written scores of editorials in favor of the outlawry of war. He also took up the same cause in an Armistice Day Sermon for 1927.[12] Dr. Morrison begins his discourse with the challenging statement that the Christian Church can put an end to war. Religion by its traditional support of international strife has made it possible. Of course, religion is not the only factor in war. Its influence is so potent, however, that, if its support of war would be withdrawn, conflicts between nations would come to an end. If organized Christianity would

[12] *Christian Century*, October 27, 1927, Sermon: "Ye Must Be Born Again."

lend its support to the erection of an institution of peace and justice for the settlement of international disputes, such a thing would speedily come to pass.

Dr. Morrison, nevertheless, does not believe that the Church can make its power manifest in pronouncing the doom of war until it comes to grip with the war problem "on the deeper levels where alone religion is capable of functioning." He recognizes that in many instances the churchly mind has grown tired of the peace theme. He believes that this attitude is due to the tendency of the preacher to exemplify in the discussion of the subject a moral dilettantism. He feels that the Church must really get under the war problem. War is woven into the curriculum of education. Next to love, it is the preëminent theme of romance. Monuments to military leaders enhance its prestige. In modern times it has become the chief instrument of the capitalistic state. The whole trend of national emotion and custom is based on the acceptance of the inevitability of war. "Civilization cannot stand one more war regardless of the number on its tag." Christian morality must cast out the evil thing. It can do so. It holds the key to peace because it holds the key to war. No successful war can be waged without it. It must function through the channels of public opinion. A vital principle of Christianity is involved in the committing of America to the abolition of war.

A dominant note in the teaching of the modern pulpit is the thought that a lasting peace must rest ultimately upon spiritual foundations. This means that nations must have faith in other nations. Traditional hatreds and antiquated prejudices must be relegated to the limbo of outworn superstitions. The idea that one man is intrinsically better than another because he happens to be born in a given nation is an example of that pro-

vincial silliness which has always been productive of unspeakable evil. It can only be dissipated by the white light of knowledge. Just as distrust is almost invariably based upon ignorance, a spirit of international understanding is always the result of a broader and deeper knowledge. Therefore, it behooves the man who would apply Christianity to international affairs to keep his finger upon the great throbbing pulse of the larger life of his generation. He who does not study recent and current history, provided he has the mental equipment for doing so, is what the late Theodore Roosevelt called an "undesirable citizen."

One especially obnoxious way in which provincial-minded prejudice manifests itself is an ingrained contempt for those with skins of a different color. White-skinned Nordics have gone to the ends of the earth obsessed with the idea that those whom they found there existed only to be exploited. An English scholar lecturing to a small group in an American university became confidential and told of the experiences of his young manhood in the English Civil Service in India and ended his disquisition by saying that the only way to manage the Oriental is to treat him as a brute. Certainly not all of the public servants of the British Empire have taken such an attitude, but the presence of such a spirit in international affairs has been highly evident. Almost as baneful has been the "white-man's-burden" attitude. This, too, is based on the idea of Nordic superiority and breeds hatred and discord.

Yet in the long run nothing will militate more strongly for peace on earth than genuine unselfishness. On one occasion a business man, prominent in ecclesiastical circles, became embittered while engaged in an argument about the League of Nations and blurted out,

"Let them stew in their own grease." How can we make any money becoming entangled in the broils of Europe? More than once have words of such an animus been uttered in our national legislative halls. But they can be duplicated by a remark made in the House of Commons. A bill calling for the disposition of the phosphates of Naura was being debated and one member speaking in support of it said: "On the matter of the League of Nations, I think it violates the Covenant, but on the grounds of imperial needs and the necessity for procuring this tremendous and vital product, I shall be inclined to support the government." As a comment on this blatant, or naïve, disregard for the ethics of international dealings Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson says: "O young men, dead in your millions, for what then and for whom has your blood been shed." International pettiness is the child of selfishness. Selfishness in a nation is as contemptible as it is in an individual. Its elimination is essential to the development of a Christian spirit in the dealing of nation with nation. And the pulpit is doing its part in bringing this to pass.

Practically all of the real sermons dealing with peace among nations discuss "spiritual foundations." It is undoubtedly true that much of the preaching about international affairs bears the distinctive marks of being the product of "A Day of Disillusionment."[13] As a man of middle life recalls the peace sermons and addresses to which he has listened during the past thirty years, he is likely to smile somewhat tolerantly until a little more thinking makes him feel the pathos of the story. In 1896 I heard a preacher make the statement that the instruments of destruction had become so powerful that their very potency precluded further war. The war be-

[13]Williams, Charles D. *The Prophetic Ministry for To-day*, p. 157.

tween the United States and Spain chilled the optimism of some of the prophets but only for a little time. Many of the peace orations, in the pulpit and out of it, have been coruscations of over-fine rhetoric. Some of them were sincere, and no one can deny that now and then a genuine note of statesmanship was sounded. There are preachers yet living who have taught peace, preached peace, and labored for peace for decades. In turning the pages of the sermonic writings of the pre-bellum days, which now seem so far back in the mists of the past, the sincere, positive, and illuminating words of such men stand out like oases of truth in a desert of empty rhetoric. But the world cataclysm caused most speakers to change both the style and content of their addresses. The speakers who were sincere in their labors for peace tried to think through new issues and gave the public the results of their cogitations. Others literally changed their peace orations into war speeches and kept on talking. Then came the Treaty at Versailles. To call it utterly fruitless is to put the case too strongly. To deny that it was disappointing would be to attempt to contravene most palpable facts. Many a thinking man has during the past ten years been wandering on the lonely mountains of disappointment. Fortunate is he who has not become lost in the valley of cynicism. But to-day there is a note of reality in discussions of peace which was lacking in the sermons of twenty years ago. Men who have lived in the gloom of putrid trenches, who have seen the clock of civilization turned back to the days of barbarism, who have read the burial service over hundreds of American boys as they were laid to rest in alien soil, can speak of the enormity of war from the depth of the bitterest knowledge. Even those who, farther from the firing lines, have felt the

throes of a world upheaval and have seen a nation's youth marching to the shambles have learned lessons which were beyond their mind's horizon in 1913.

The place of the Church in the international life of the next twenty years is strategic and commanding. As one to-day attempts to discern the signs of the times he cannot help feeling that she can measure up to the challege of a giant hour. "Where there is no vision the people perish." To-day it looks as though the leaders of Christendom are seeing the vision and the time may be not far distant when men and women everywhere will behold the selfsame vision of a world which has relegated war to the place where it belongs, to the graveyard of antedated cruelties and anachronistic delusions.

XI

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

A TRAINED mind is as a well-shaped chain. Moral preparation is even more essential. Keep the fine edge that was sharpened in your less sophisticated youth; hold the old attitude of a courtlier past toward women and children and friends. Spiritual preparation is a step yet in advance; for by it we prepare not only to meet God, but to companion him, to keep in his stride, to walk in his way, to participate in those great assignments he shares with all workers who are building a better world. Intellectual, moral, and spiritual preparation are one, and with physical self-seasoning they form the four sides of a square. Let the four-square life be the goal of your ambition![1]

Another way to be happy is to exclude jealousy from life. Goethe says: "Who is the happiest of men? He who values the merits of others, and in their pleasure takes joy even as though 'twere his own." Under the existing impetus of competition, and in the strife for precedence which pervades social, professional, and business activities, it is not easy to appreciate this source of happiness. The thoughtful Paul said, "Rejoice with those that do rejoice." He understood this principle. When we see another home more beautiful

[1]Poling, Daniel A. *Radio Talks*, p. 152. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

than our own, we are likely mentally to compare notes, and then go home a little dissatisfied with our own. Why not rather rejoice the more greatly in our own because we have broadened our capacity for enjoyment through the development of appreciation?[2]

This is a theme that Bojer briefly touches upon in *Treacherous Ground.* It is all summed up in that verse which I quoted in that sermon:

Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;
But you can't do that when you're flying words.
Words unuttered, may sometimes fall back dead,
But God himself can't stop them when they're said!

So it is with sin. You may repent, you may try to atone—but the sin goes on; the innocent suffer for untold generations; and the punishment of sin is this consciousness.

The best way to master evil is not to commit evil. The best way to conquer sin is to have nothing to do with it. A sin unsinned, an evil not committed, is never the master of any soul.

There is always an hour when a sin may be made right. That hour is in the beginning before it has had a chance to spread and choke and crush; before it gets its power.[3]

That friendship took the crude and ignorant Peter, and by patience and example refined him until he was turned into a leader and a saint. It laid hold of the violent-tempered John, who once would have called

[2]Stone, John Timothy. *Everyday Religion,* p. 214. Used by permission of W. A. Wilde Company.

[3]Stidger, Wm. L. *The High Faith of Fiction and Drama,* p. 208. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

down fire from heaven upon certain villagers, and taught him that final grace of strong men, tenderness. "Little children, love one another," he was often heard to murmur in old age. One after another these commonplace men were claimed and roused by him, not by his teaching but by himself. Once when Peter was denying his Lord—and no one could have said how far he was now prepared to drift—Jesus "turned and looked," and by that look an anchor suddenly dropped for Peter's drifting heart, a new and larger thing was liberated within him, and Peter became a man again. The friendship of Jesus has given Christianity to the world.[4]

Now, this is just the peril of compromise—it gets men to thinking of something else than the will of God. They cease being priests and become politicians. Though they begin with all sincerity and loyalty to truth, other considerations begin to appear. Sly insinuations of a course more pleasant and profitable than rigid adherence to truth slip into the background of the conscious thinking and begin to make their deadly appeal to instinct and emotion. A fog of doubt is raised by cross currents from the hot zone of the ideal and the cold zone of the practical. And it often happens that the man who went into a conference with the determination to stand by the truth at all costs comes away completely befuddled as to what is the truth. A repetition of such experiences leads to a moral confusion that often chooses the evil when it means the good.[5]

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[4]McCall, Oswald W. S. *The Stringing of the Bow*, p. 117. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

[5]Day, Albert Edward. *Present Perils in Religion*, p. 161. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

We need a religious motive that will not only satisfy our emotional nature, but that will enable us to live rightly, effectively, and happily amid the confusing conditions of our everyday existence. There is a certain type of religion which denies that such integrity is necessary. Salvation, according to this faith, is a matter of belief alone. The conduct of some perons, who claim to be on terms of particular intimacy with the Divine, make it clear that, to them, it does not matter how contradictory to the spirit of Christ the acts of the saved individual may be. Of course, no man wants to put a limit on the saving grace of God; yet such a view of salvation does not satisfy us. We know that there is something wrong with a religious faith which makes a man a bad neighbor, or which fills him with spiritual conceit, just as we know there is something wrong with scientific theory which fails to justify itself in practical experience. We want a religious motive that will keep us straight amid the temptations of everyday life, that will keep our hearts sympathetic while we engage in the shrewd necessities of business, that will keep alive in us the vein of poetry, however hard headed we may be, that will quicken our imagination so that we can, on occasion, throw off the preoccupations of the work-a-day world and see the things of God.[6]

If you want—
Happiness, be content with what you can afford.
Wealth, learn to enjoy life.
Friends, be charitable of others' faults.
Promotions, be bigger than your present job.
Popularity, be amiable under criticism.

[6]Magary, Alvin E. *Character and Happiness*, p. 151. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Fame, do some necessary task better than it has ever been done.
Peace, keep a good conscience toward God.[7]

Then if armies, courts, asylums, churches, schools, and colleges cannot save society, what can save it? Only one thing—the spirit of the Good Samaritan—first as a voluntary, self-assumed obligation governing the daily life of individuals, then inevitably as a group motive guiding the activities of collective individuals in business, politics, and religion. Jesus teaches in this parable that oil and wine, time and effort, culture, power, and wealth are all to be used for the good of humanity. When this is done physical force will be employed only for sanctified ends and might well be effective for right because might will be right. Courts will not merely administer the law, but will dispense justice; knowledge devoted to human need will become an uplifting power, the philanthropist will give himself with his money; and the rule of gold will become the Golden Rule. Love will be the impelling motive and service its expression in action.[8]

There have been hundreds of choice minds engaged in creative literature who followed the precedents set by Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. Their works are not ornamented affectations straining for effect. At their best these writers are serene, pure, sustained. Some of them are poets whose melodies are reminiscent of those which flooded heaven's vault when the morning stars sang together for joy. The mental

[7]Smith, Roy L. *Sentence Sermons*, p. 118. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

[8]Prince, Leon C. *Pharaoh's Question*, p. 135. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

pictures they transmit have swayed the preaching mind and supplied it with its fairest material. Although dead, they are yet alive forevermore, potent and communicative, unsurpassed in beauty, truth, and goodness. They are the sources of moral and religious advantage, and form, as it were, an armory stored with trusted weapons for man's warfare against his most formidable foe—a corrupted imagination. In Bunyan's allegory, Pilgrim, who went down the Valley and into the River, heard fiends whispering blasphemies in his ears. He supposed these evil voices to be an echo of his own thoughts. The Bedford dreamer well understood that the reflexes of man's long primeval past are prone to attack the best in us, and have no regard even for the sacrament of death. Truly none can escape what he has thought, dreamed, or done. In the realm of imagination there are odd and frightful apparitions which we would fain bury in oblivion. The effective protection against their assaults is found in the consecration of imagination's mysterious powers to the Christ of God and the service of men. It may not bring us to final positions, nor express for us the inexpressible. But it will explore every avenue of thought and every means of positive faith we acquire, always leaving scope for additional disclosures of the eternal mind. Its disciplined use will keep preachers in touch with their times, enabling them to explain the Church and her gospel to the intelligence of their hearers, to take account of religious realities, and to justify the ways of God toward man.[9]

Somewhere on the horizon is a Jerusalem for you—some good and unselfish single purpose for your life.

[9]Cadman, S. Parkes. *Imagination and Religion*, p. 96. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Seek it, find it, steadfastly set your face to go there. Courage will come. It is God's way with man. And when all is said and done you know what heritage you want most to leave behind you when you go from this world. Above money or property or any amount of things, you want to leave a heritage of courage. Nothing else will do. It doesn't matter so much whether or not you reach your Jerusalem; honor, fame, and happiness may come if you do, but so long as your face is steadfastly set to go there and you falter not, you will leave your heritage of courage.[10]

But I am thinking also of a second thing, of that feeling of inadequacy, of hindrance, or impediment, or inability, to express a worthy message, which may bring some hearts to despair. Indeed, the greatest artists often feel this inadequacy as they seek to express the things which they know are beyond any full proclaiming. Tennyson sighs, "And I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me." And Wordsworth writes "of thoughts that do lie too deep for utterance." How much more, then, shall lesser men feel that they have not words wherein to set forth their longing love or their eager rejoicing.

Yet each may well believe that he has some gift to bring, that he has some word to shout or to whisper, that he has some note of song to sing, or at least to blend with other voices in a united hymn. This, then, is the reason for the joining of the two texts: "Let every one that hath breath praise the Lord," and let every one know that he may bring that which he hath, "according to that a man hath is it expected and not according to

[10]Eastman, Fred. Sermon: "Courage—Five Minutes Longer," *The Christian Century*, March 24, 1927. Used by permission.

that he hath not." So bring what you have and be sure that if it be sincerely brought it will be found worthy and acceptable. Indeed, without it a chord in the music would fail. Without it the fuller measure of acceptable offering would not be complete.[11]

Unless and until you and I stand amazed before the Divine thought that is working itself out in the distant heavens and in the human heart, and can say, "This is the Lord's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes," we can find little meaning in religion. But when we and those whom we can awaken are again ready to marvel in the presence of the unseen soul and its mysteries, we shall be at the beginning of a religious experience whose consequences in life no one can predict, and whose end will be seen only when eternity affirms the conception of our best hours. "To be religious," says a recent writer, "is to be vividly cognizant of and fully responsible to the fact that the universe contains something which is of more value than anything else, and to be stirred to joy and enthusiasm by that fact."[12]

Restore men to God by restoring them to themselves. You will be fooled sometimes. Well, what if you are? The man whom you tried to help never forgets your act. We must restore people. What if a man does sin and fall? Even then you and I ought to seek to restore him. You say: "He has fallen, and it is all over with him." All over? It is a good deal harder to be patient with a

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[11]Huget, J. Percival. Sermon: "That a Man Hath," *Homiletic Review*, November, 1928. Used by permission.

[12]Speight, Harold E. B. Sermon: "The Divine Surprise," *Boston Preachers*, edited by A. Avery Gates, p. 47. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Company.

man than to denounce him because he has failed. You cannot win a dog's affection by kicking him; you cannot gain human beings by scorning them when they have slipped. What the fallen man needs is confidence and patience. If a man has fallen among the thieves of his own wretched habits, how do you know how hard he has fought for years to conquer? He may be making ten times as brave a fight to stand on his feet as you have ever made.[13]

In some way or other the divine companionship must become real, constant, and vital. Have you read the story called "The Practice of the Presence"? It tells of a simple monk who was assigned to the lowly work of cleaning the vegetables and of washing the pots and pans in the monastery. To him came the vision of Jesus walking with him, staying sympathetically by him, in his humble kitchen, while the other monks painted, carved, orated, prayed, or meditated. He, of all the monks, became most spiritual. He, above all the monks, was sought out by those in trouble, temptation, doubt, or distress. Among the black pots, among the plain pans, in common toil, in a low kitchen, he alone found the Master; he alone walked in the constant presence of the Son of Man.

It may be that here among the smoking stacks among the roaring mills, in the black streets, and in the foggy air, we may practice the Presence above our more favored neighbors. Steeling the nerves of our souls to meet the shock and storm of a materialistic civilization we may accomplish more than those confident and easy-going souls, who are not required to make such violent

[13]Stone, John Timothy. *Places of Quiet Strength*, p. 91. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

effort. With Christ in us the hope of glory we may yet triumph and with Browning may chant:

> Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough—
> That bids nor sit, nor stand—
> But go.[14]

A man can take no better road to reality than this which leads through the struggle with selfishness, in himself and in the world. The biggest battle we have on hand to-day is the fight with selfishness. We should nail that thesis on the door of every college chapel in the land. In an academic atmosphere we are tempted to give more thought to other problems, but the fight with selfishness remains the battle over all. We often miss this point by arguing that self-interest is a permanent and good instinct in our nature, and so it is. But the true outlet for self-interest is in service, not in selfishness. The "ancient foe" would long since have blocked all progress and wrecked the world but for a devoted few who, in opposition, have given up their lives to God's spirit of concern for the good of all. They have released the undefeated power that has moved the world toward truth and righteousness. By their sacrifice our great chance at life has come. For shame if college-trained men take this blood-bought chance only to join the sordid company who seize what they can for themselves. God grant, rather, that where the fight is thickest with the selfish customs of the world, there may be found a group of men with your inheritance still standing out with their backs against the wall.[15]

[14]Ewers, John R. Sermon: "Is Jesus' Way Possible?" Used by permission of the author.

[15]Wicks, Robert Russell. Sermon: "The Demand for Reality," *Preaching in the New Era*, edited by Elmore McNeill McKee, p. 172. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

For ordinarily and normally money is and ought to be a symbol of service. The tailor prepares clothes for the shoemaker, and the shoemaker protects the feet of the tailor; and both profit in the exchange of services. Never forget that in every honest transaction both sides gain! But now look at bribe-taking politicians and industrial grafters, such as have been exposed in various parts of our country recently, or stock jugglers and investment sharpers—not honest brokers, mark you!—Who are out to rob the public and to fleece the lambs—you and me! Those men have rendered no social equivalent for the services which their ill-gotten bank accounts are able to exact from others. In their hands the coins are liars that have lost their souls. Every time such men buy a beefsteak or go to the theater they are social highwaymen. The same thing is true of the profiteer, and the shyster lawyer, and the quack doctor, and the gambler. It is true of the employer who robs the employee of his rightful share of the earnings of the factory —and I have not the slightest idea what that is; and it is true of the employee who robs the employer by demanding more wages than constitute his rightful share—and I have not the slightest idea what that is. To learn how to make a dollar mean a dollar's worth of service, and to see to it that no one gets ten dollars for one dollar's worth of service—that is one of the greatest tasks, not only economic and social, but ethical and religious, which confronts civilization. How did you acquire the dollars in your pocket—by gift, or by labor, or by gambling, or by grafting, or by stealing? According to the mind of Jesus are those coins rightfully yours?[16]

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[16]Tweedy, Henry Hallam. Sermon: "The Christian's Use of Money," *Preaching in the New Era*, edited by Elmore McNeill McKee, p. 135. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

"Precious, indeed," says John Ruskin, "are those thirty minutes by which the teacher tries to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sin, to warn them of all their dangers, to try them by this way and that, to stir the hard fastenings of the doors where the Master himself has stood and knocked, yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets where wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hands and no man regarded. Thirty minutes to raise the dead in."

Preaching is not only social but personal. An address which contains no message to the individual is never a sermon. If a preacher could know the real needs of any congregation which he faces he would be well-nigh appalled by the magnitude of his tasks. Here is old age, often lonely, disappointed, and sick at heart. Here is youth, bewildered, groping, tempted. Here, too, there are men and women struggling on beneath the burdens of life's noonday. Someone in that congregation is battling against the temptations of the flesh and another, without knowing it, has allowed the sin of pride or jealousy or malice or greed or some other of the subtler sins to sear his very soul. It is practically certain that before him there is somebody literally dead in trespasses and in sin, who has closed the doors of his heart to the voices of the spirit. Ruskin is not giving expression to any artistic exaggeration when he speaks of "thirty minutes to wake the dead in."

"Tell them about their sins" was the sententious advice which an old preacher gave to a young pulpiteer. No one who knows the elements which constitute good preaching would for a moment minimize the value of such advice. But the preacher must go further. People

need, and desire, to know how to get rid of their sins. Samuel Johnson once described himself as "an old struggler." And the same term could be applied to the average human life. Most of us are strugglers. The fight against temptation never ends. Consequently, the sermon that explains the significance of temptation and tells of the ways of conquering it comes very near to the lives of the struggling human beings who make up a congregation.

It is highly interesting to note that along with the emphasis upon problems possibly somewhat more remote, the kind of preaching which helps the individual in the solving of his personal ethical and spiritual problems is not being neglected. For example, the student of modern homiletics can without difficulty put his finger upon scores of sermons dealing with every aspect of temptation. Two of them can be briefly analyzed at this time.

The first is a sermon by Dr. Daniel J. Wetzel, pastor of the First Reformed Church, Reading, Pennsylvania, from the text: "Then Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (Matthew iv:1.)[17] After a brief expository introduction Dr. Wetzel begins his discussion by the statement that temptation opens on two distinct levels of human experience: the lower level of sense experience and the higher level of mental processes. Next he analyzes the temptations in the physical or sense life. These temptations are in blood and bone; in flesh and nerve. Some natures are so constituted as to be vibrant with intense bodily appetites. In such lives soul battles must be fought. No one can run away from bodily temptations. "They must be

[17] *The Reformed Church Pulpit*, edited by Frederick K. Stamm, p. 77. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

met first-hand and defeated on the battleground of the human soul." Then there are temptations in man's mental processes. These are more subtle, more intriguing. They are not the result of sudden impulses. They require planning. They are cold-blooded and premeditated. Yielding is the result of long calculating maneuvering. Such a type of sinner deserves less sympathy than the one who is lured from the right path by a sudden imperious temptation.

The next phase of the sermon discusses the characteristics of temptation and is outlined as follows:

I. It is an inner experience. It is not to be looked for in dark alleys and in thick woods. Moving west will not deliver us. Men fled to monasteries to escape the evils of the world. But the effort was futile.

II. Temptation comes not as a hideous monster but in a pleasing shape. It often offers what appears to be a pleasurable satisfying compensation.

III. Temptation comes to us sometimes through our good desires and our nobler purposes. A man might say like Paul: "This one thing I do." As a result he becomes unsocial and loses touch with God, man, religion, and the world.

IV. Temptation gets us where we have ability. Temptation comes to us through our greater talents. Many a man has allowed his outstanding talent to be the door through which temptation enters.

The sermon closes with an analysis of the temptation of Jesus. He was hungry, and he was tempted to satisfy his desire. He was tempted to display his power by casting himself from the height. He was tempted again at the very seat of power, along the path of his highest purpose, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." God called him in one direc-

tion and temptation in another. He had to fight it out within. "Guard well your noblest desires lest they be diverted. Look well to your strength that it does not become your means of destruction. Fight it out with God as an ally."

The second sermon on this subject which can be discussed here is by Dr. Miles Krumbine, pastor of Parkside Lutheran Church, Buffalo. Its title is "How Jesus Helps Us in Temptation."[18] It, also, begins with a discussion of the nature of temptation. To be tempted is not a sign of depravity. The only people that are never tempted are the hardened sinner and the complacent Pharisee. "Our temptations spring from a curious mixture of evil intention, past meanness, complacency, and pride." Very often they are of our manufacture. Our past sins fight to retain a mastery over us. We become the victims of habits which we have allowed to dominate our lives and then we must struggle to regain supremacy. Our past goodness is also a source of temptation. We become satisfied with past accomplishment. We imagine that we have gained self-mastery and then we relax our vigilance. Our imperious passions are also a part of the baggage of life not easily managed. Hazlitt says, "The passions contract and warp the progress of life. They paralyze all of it that is not devoted to their tyranny and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the crabbedness of age." The sex instinct is of itself entirely noble, but its mismanagement has caused not only most of the misery of life but has spelled the doom of many a people.

Another source of temptation is the possession of

[18] *The Way to the Best*, p. 65. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

power. It enables one to do all with an apparent impunity. An especially dangerous factor in the encouraging of temptation is the looseness of the present-day social code. Its exactions are few. It is apt to resent moral excellence more than it does moral degradation. The man who would reach the highest moral values must resist the torpifying influence of social convention.

In the rest of the sermon, Dr. Krumbine takes up the question, "How we overcome." He takes the position that in any general campaign for right living there must be first, a dominant purpose, second, a dominant cause, a mastering ideal, and third, a dominant friendship. Jesus gives us all three of these. Those who serve him have a goal, an ideal, which means both a dominant purpose and a dominant cause. And in him we find our greatest need, a dominant friendship. We can relate ourselves in a vital way to the Jesus of history, to the living Christ.

The field for ethical preaching is as broad and rich as life itself. The subjects with which it can deal are almost without limit. At every period of a man's life he needs instruction, comfort, and inspiration. Very few sermons are prepared especially for old people and almost none are preached for the particular benefit of those in middle life. There are, though, hundreds of sermons which have had for their especial object the edification of youth. If one would judge by published material, he could not help but being strongly impressed that college students have been highly fortunate in this regard. Between 1896 and 1907 Dr. Francis Greenwood Peabody of Harvard published four notable series of addresses to college students and a number of other books have since appeared in the same field. A recent addition to the literature of ethical addresses to college students

is *Facing Life* by President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University. The material in this work is divided into five sections with the following captions: "The New Environment," "The Widening Horizon," "The Deepening Faith," "Persistent Problems," and "Beyond College Gates." The addresses have to do with practical subjects like "Study and Faith," "The Use of Sunday," "The Cure for Loneliness," "The Social Message of Religion," and "New Motives to Old Virtues." Although these addresses are adapted primarily for college students, a large part of their material is by no means useless to anyone who is fighting the good fight of faith.

Many of the sermons preached in recent years to young people in college and out of it are of such a nature as to be helpful to men and women at any stage of their journey along the path of life. *The Just Weight* by Bishop Francis J. McConnell is introduced by its author as a volume of addresses prepared primarily for college audiences. Yet every one of the discourses has a reach which prevents its value being limited by its message to student audiences. For example, the address "On Being Perfect"[19] gives a modern and highly significant note to a noble but sometimes sorely abused truth. The text is, "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." The gist of the discourse is that the main duty of the seeker for perfection is to get the spirit of willingness to give men their chance, especially if they happen to be our enemies. This conception takes a doctrine which has been the plaything of unrestrained individualism and makes it preëminently social. It takes the position that perfection is not a personal spiritual luxury, but that it is just as truly a social grace to bring one into communion of will with his

[19] P. 145. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

fellow men. Such teaching is highly valuable for college students, yet it is just as edifying to the rest of the human race.

Another preacher whom college men have heard gladly is Charles R. Brown, for years dean of the Yale School of Religion. Dean Brown's collegiate preaching, like that of Bishop McConnell, has too wide a sweep to be confined to academic cloisters. One of his ablest collegiate pulpit addresses is "How Old Are You?"[20] This sermon is based on the question which Pharaoh asked Jacob at the time when the patriarch came down to Egypt at the request of his son, Joseph. Jacob's answer was: "The years of my pilgrimage have been one hundred and thirty, and they have not yet attained the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." This personal question, however, might be asked in such a way as to have far deeper implications than those which lie on the surface. The real point of such an inquiry might suggest not so much how long ago you were born as how much you have lived. Life is not to be measured entirely in the terms of one dimension. It has breadth and height and depth as well as length.

Of these, length is the least important, but a man must have some length of days in order to accomplish anything. Some long-lived men have done their best work when they were past sixty, or even past seventy. But the longest life is not necessarily the most useful one. Here is the biography of Methuselah as it is recorded in the Holy Writ: "And Methuselah begat sons and daughters and lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years and he died." There is nothing said in this sentence about breadth of interest, or depth of conviction,

[20]Brown, Charles R. *Yale Talks*, p. 55. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

or height of ideals. To this life there was nothing but length. How much fuller was the thirty-three-year life of Jesus Christ! Length in itself does not make a life great.

The breadth of a life is determined by range of interest, wideness of contacts. The prosperous, self-made, self-satisfied man who trots along the narrow towpath of his own material success lacks breadth. Then, too, there are lives without depth. It is not hard to find people who live on the surface, who have no positive convictions about anything whatsoever. They have no deep, underlying purposes and principles of action. They lack the power which comes from them. The dimension of height looms mightily in some lives; in others it is infinitesimal. Dr. Brown quotes a young Oriental whom he once heard, "I am not what I ought to be. I am not what I want to be. But by the grace of God I am not what I was and I mean to be like him." In commenting on these broken words he said, "There you have it! The real height of every man's life must be measured by the upward, outward, Godward reach of his own aspiration and resolve."

Preaching of this type serves an indubitable need. It is educative. It cannot but enlarge the horizons of those who hear it. But it does more than this. Years ago an elderly preacher, who was a member of a congregation to which I preached one Sunday evening, told me that my sermon had "edified" him. I have never been entirely sure that the word was intended as a compliment, for, unfortunately, our ecclesiastical fathers have no especial difficulty in keeping their enthusiasm for the homiletical efforts of youth well under control. Yet even if my ministerial listener was using the word with subtle satire, "edifying" preaching is of consider-

able value. The term comes from two Latin words, *aedis*, a building, and *facere*, to make. Edifying preaching builds itself into our lives. Once, as I was leaving church after Sunday morning service in a college town in northern Ohio, an elderly lady remarked to me of the sermon to which we had listened, "That sermon built me up." That is exactly what a good sermon does. It upbuilds the genuine hearer intellectually and spiritually. He obtains something from it which enlarges, enriches, and dynamizes his life.

Upbuilding preaching tends to give young men and women, as well as those of more advanced years, something which will enable them to resist the moral undertow which to-day exists in every American community. We live in a time of the apotheosis of the commonplace, the shallow and the trivial. Cheap pleasures and tawdry ideals seem to be omnipresent. Comparatively few have the moral stamina to resist the obsessions of the crowd. The average news-stand is a confession of intellectual bankruptcy. The American people obtain pleasure in looking at silly pictures and listening to worse music. Any person possessing clarity of vision cannot fail to see that there are innumerable forces in the America of to-day which tend to break down rather than to build up. It devolves upon the pulpit to contravene such tendencies in every way possible. This is indeed an uphill job. There are an increasing number who never hear sermons. Long since they ceased to attend church and if KWA or WGB brings a sermon to them from afar they hastily turn the dial and listen to combinations of sounds suggesting the tom-toms of Central Africa. To become pessimistic is not especially difficult. Yet no one can come into contact with the thousands of virile, practical, illuminating sermons

without being impressed with the thought that from the pulpit there comes a force which potently militates against the deteriorating influences in modern life. Even if we might have reason to wish that they were more widely heard, we must remember that echoes roll from soul to soul. What affects the life of one man may, through his contacts, influence many more. A little leaven can be of tremendous potency.

XII

THE GOSPEL OF THE LARGER HOPE

To MAKE our thinking inductive and constrain us to begin at the near end, I will say that immortality is not some destiny conferred from without, but the flower and fruitage which must be developed from a life within. It is not like the gift of knighthood, as when a man kneels before a royal sovereign a plebeian, and at the touch of a sword rises an aristocrat, a titled gentleman. It is not the touch of a magician's wand by which the mortal parts are suddenly endowed with deathless qualities. It is not something that can be put on like a cosmetic, rouge, or powder. It is the bounding pulse of an inner life, the life of Christ in the soul, blushing with an imperishable youth. It is mortality swallowed up in life.[1]

Where did he go and where shall we go? I do not know and I do not care. I don't think we shall go to any place, be bounded by any local habitation, or restricted to any material sphere. Spirit with spirit shall meet; we shall see as we have never seen before; we shall remember, for memory is the very essence of personality; we shall communicate not with tongue and gesture, but heart to heart and soul to soul. We shall post over land

[1]Woelfkin, Cornelius. *Religion—Thirteen Sermons*, p. 203. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

and ocean without rest upon his errands, as Milton says. We shall have work to do, and play, and unending liberty. Sailors shall sail if they want to, carpenters shall carve, singers shall sing, and painters paint, and thinkers think. Players shall perform their dramas with mountains and clouds for scenery, and forests unending for their setting, and blazing stars for their footlights. All shall play as children with a lightness of heart and an exuberance that no untoward incidents may ever mar. Let your imagination play as it will, it cannot go astray, for the logic of the premises of Jesus sweeps upward and outward through the blue, the ether, and all whirling stars of light. No rhetoric and no music, no poetry and no eloquence can set it forth "For it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what shall be."[2]

It will be a great advance, it seems to me, if we can get rid of the idea that death necessarily crystallizes our lives—that at that moment they become set like a plaster of Paris cast, incapable of future development or alteration. I believe there is every reason to trust that the world to come is characterized by eternal progress and eternal love. Possibly the new penology has something to say about the doctrine of eternal punishment. If parents punish children only to correct them, if the school principal is allowed to punish his pupils only to reform them, if the judge of the juvenile court is not so much concerned to vindicate the law as to save and restore the youthful law-breaker, if the ultimate goal of all legal punishment is only to protect society and the only complete protection of society lies in the ref-

[2]Jenkins, Burris. *The Drift of the Day*, p. 173. Used by permission of Willett, Clark and Colby.

ormation of the criminal, then the great possibility suggests itself that this highest human conception of crime and punishment cannot be higher than God's, and the doctrine of eternal punishment—continuing forever and achieving nothing—is made simply impossible in the face of the new penology. That the hell which begins in this life will continue in the life to come is altogether probable, though we must make great allowance for the fact that in the life to come we shall be free from these physical bodies which are the source of so much of our trouble. But if hell continues, God's love will also continue; and I do not believe that love can be eternally set aside, but that somehow, sometime, every soul in the far country will come to itself in deep repentance and return to the Father's house.[3]

Let us now admit that our preaching of the other world has often been mystical moonshine. He made it as practical as the signing of a check. When you fill it out in your business office the date points back to the birth of Christ, and the object for which you write that check may point forward to the heaven that awaits you over yonder. Every day, at the desk, or in the factory, or the school, in business life, in social life, your heaven is in the making. Every time you determine whether the resources God has put in your hand shall be used unselfishly or selfishly, you are enriching or impoverishing the glory of future immortality. By the commonest deeds, by the cup of cold water, by the little help, by the Christ-like spirit which brings us into Christ-like fellowship, we are building up the riches that will await us beyond the veil. . . . You remember how Vachel

[3]Palmer, Albert W. *The New Christian Epic*, p. 172. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

Lindsay pictures General Booth entering into Heaven? I would like to have seen Wilberforce or Charles Spurgeon or Dwight L. Moody enter heaven. What a scene, what a welcome, when a man who has served God and humanity is greeted by the great company of those whom he has helped and uplifted, and who have been bound to him by ties of love stronger than hooks of steel! Is there any life investment better than this? Given first to Christ—Christ in us the hope of glory—then in the love of Christ let us serve humanity. "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail they may receive you into heavenly habitations."

How should I conceive
What a heaven there may be? Let it but resemble
Earth myself have known! No bliss that's finer, fuller,
Only—bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.[4]

The assurance of immortality has been cherished by the best and noblest members of the race. It has won the confidence of the strongest minds in recorded history. The beneficent results which flow from it in daily life give a strong warrant for its truth. Men do not gather figs of thistles; nor do they produce golden deeds from leaden motives. The great doctrine works well in the rough-and-tumble of human life; it brings courage and comfort and joy into the experience of men. From the standpoint of the conservation of energy, immortality is confirmed. We know that, while matter and energy

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[4]Wishart, Charles Frederick. *The God of the Unexpected*, p. 167. Used by permission of The College of Wooster Press.

change their form, they are not destroyed in the transformation. If this is so, surely, in a far higher realm it is most incredible that the human spirit should be annihilated when it passes through the experience of physical death. Take so noble and wise a person as Louis Pasteur, for example. What an utter waste of the most precious energy it would be if he did not persist as a personal being after the end of his earthly life came. Surely the Creator who saves atoms will not waste human souls. The greatest prophets and poets of the race have been confident of personal immortality. They have sung about it even in the darkest night of the soul. Then immortality is demanded to answer the intuitions and yearnings of our own nature. Just as the eye argues for light and the wing for the air, so the great yearning within us for a deathless existence assures us that such an existence is a reality. This, from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, is one of many assurances:

> My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live forevermore,
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is.[5]

So in the end we are taught that we keep our rendezvous with life not in some finality of accomplishment, but in enriched continuity of experience. The future must always hold something or else to-day is strangely empty. The residue of dissatisfaction which attends life even at its best is a part of its wealth. Life would not keep faith with us if it left us nothing to seek.

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[5]Davis, Ozora S. *Preaching on Church and Community Occasions*, p. 122. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

If life be truly kind and God be truly just, even eternity itself will, in the wealth of its satisfaction, leave still a place for that hunger and thirst of the soul which, if they be lost, would be the end of life, which, if they be not met in such measure as to give us power to go on, would be the mockery of life, but which in their strange mingling of the attained and the unattained are, by the grace of God, life's supreme kindness.[6]

The eternal life, then, is all of a piece, one here, hereafter, and forever, its conditions everywhere the same, its experience a perpetual revelation—pray, what more do we really want or need to know?

Let us be more specific in the effort to make this matter plain, as a help both to our thinking and to our living. What we have to remember is that all the realities that make life great, deep, and rewarding, abide hereafter untouched by time or death. They are at once realities and prophecies which, if we consider them deeply, are like luminous streamers thrown forward by an enormous searchlight, and if they do not reveal all, they do illumine the pathways of the future, just as they sustain, fortify, and guide us here below. First of all, God lives here, hereafter, and unto everlasting, and in him there is no death, no darkness, no distance. Without God immortality would be the ultimate horror of desolation, not a destiny but a doom. With him, it is a lengthening vista of hope and joy. "In him we live and move and have our being," said the apostle, and that will be as true after death as it is here. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations, from everlasting to everlasting," said the psalmist; and death

[6]Atkins, Gaius Glenn. *Craftsmen of the Soul*, p. 42. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

does not so much as cast a shadow upon that elemental fact. As for man, his days may be as the grass that withers, as a tale that is told, as a vapor that melts, but God lives, and we live in him![7]

We may rest our case for immortality not in the detail of the story of the Resurrection, but in the massive necessity of it. Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality to light, and the challenge of two thousand years has only the more strongly established the reasonableness of our faith. It is no light thing, this faith of ours; it has for its franchise the testimony of a great cloud of witnesses and each successive Easter confirms its imperial right. We may, therefore, go bravely on, nor fear the winds, nor waves, nor any passing shadow. We, too, may sense even in our midnights that we draw near to some country and wait, as we listen to the beating of the waves of the temporal upon the shores of the eternal, for that sure rising of a dawn without a cloud which will light with deathless beauty those far-sought shores of promise and of hope.[8]

"I am not interested in immortality. I should rather like to look forward to an existence beyond this life, but if this is all that there is to it, there is no use in worrying about it. The thing for a man to do is to try to do right in this world and let the hereafter take care of itself." Thus spoke some years ago an intelligent, high-principled man. Upon hearing him the question

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[7]Newton, Joseph Fort. Sermon: "Life After Death," *Great Modern Sermons*, edited by Hobart D. McKeehan, p. 172. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

[8]Atkins, Gaius Glenn. *The Undiscovered Country*, p. 33. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

arose in my mind as to whether or not his attitude toward immortality was exceptional or typical. After years of thought and observation I am firmly convinced that the average man or woman is intensely concerned with the thought of immortality. The comparatively large number of sermons which are preached on this subject are not delivered to inert, bored audiences but to people anxious to come into contact with living truth in regard to one of life's vital problems.

The question of immortality naturally has far-reaching philosophical and theological complications, but these aspects are not those which have received the major emphasis in sermons. The pulpit is not a laboratory for the working out of metaphysical intricacies. The preacher must deal with the conclusions of the philosophers rather than with the processes by which they attained them. His task is not to display his erudition but to help struggling humanity. Hence he produces a type of material which, although it might not meet all of the requirements of the hypercritical pseudo-scientist, is representative of the best available thought about the deeply rooted idea of the immortality of the soul.

To get at the best which is being said to-day about immortality it is necessary for us to step nearly eighty years into the past. It was in 1850 that Tennyson published his *In Memoriam*, which Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke has sententiously and beautifully characterized as a poem "of the immortality of love and the love of immortality." There are stanzas in this poem which have been more convincing to some who brood over and long after immortality than any other lines in the literature of mankind. In the third stanza of the poem there is expressed a thought which is stressed in almost

every available sermon having to do with the longing for a life "beyond the veil":

> Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
> Thou madest man, he knows not why,
> He thinks he was not made to die;
> And thou hast made him: thou art just.

In these four lines we find two of the most satisfying arguments for immortality. The first is that there is world-wide instinct for immortality, that this desire is a universal craving of the human spirit. The conviction of a continued life after death is as universal as any belief of mankind. This belief is held to-day not only in the countries of the world which represent the cultural heritage of the immemorial years of the fadeless past, but also by the primitive man of the jungle. The graves of prehistoric man evidence the same belief. Man from his very nature seems to be an instinctive believer in immortality. If those of us who believe in a life after death are deceived, practically the whole human race is deluded with us. If the human race with essential unanimity has a certain common longing, it is an accord with sound reasoning to believe that such a desire is a response to some great truth outside of ourselves. The fact that a belief in immortality is universal is an evidence that there is an objective reason for the existence of said belief.

Along with this far-reaching argument for the continuance of life beyond the grave there is an allied truth which is equally convincing. It is expressed in the last two lines of the stanza from *In Memoriam*, quoted above. Man thinks that he was not made to die. God made him a creature holding such a belief. If man is in error here it is because he was created a deluded crea-

ture. A just God would not make man a person deceived by the basic nature of his being. If man is misled in this way, God has misled him, and therefore is not a just God. The thought of immortality is closely allied to the idea of the moral integrity of the universe. To be compelled to believe in an immoral, or even unmoral, universe would take away the cornerstone of all sound ethics.

There is another reason why a faith in immortality is essential to a belief in the moral integrity of the universe. We need another world to make up for the ethical deficiencies of this one. There are times when truth is upon the scaffold and wrong upon the throne. Selfish, cynical, brutal men live in peace, comfort, and affluence. High-minded, honorable, unselfish people endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune year after year. Sometimes blatant wickedness apparently comes off scot free and deserving merit undergoes punishment after punishment. Dr. Washington Gladden once said: "For the wrongs that are never righted here, there is a recompense hereafter. The rogues that go unwhipped, the hypocrites that walk abroad unsuspected, the giant oppressors who gather by tribute the wealth of continents and build their fortunes on the ruin of homes—for all these surely retribution is coming; the mills of the gods grind slowly but no malefactor is done with them when man screws down his coffin lid. Do not distrust that sense of justice in your breast which cries out against the honor and power and fame which come to greedy, unscrupulous, cruel men. There is a day after to-day." Without a confidence in the coming of this "day after to-day" no man can believe in the justice of the moral order of the universe. If wrongs and inequalities of this life are never righted, there is no ade-

quate reason for believing in the divine justice. And here again the doctrine of immortality closely relates itself to the idea of a righteously ruled universe. One of the world's great prophets of immortality was Robert Browning. Never once does he seem to doubt the continued existence of man. It would be easy to glean from his pages a fair-sized anthology of thoughts about immortality. As we read him we every now and then come across lines like these:

> What's time? leave Now for dogs and apes!
> Man has Forever.

> A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for?

The idea at the base of such poetry is the incompleteness of our lives here on earth. Our achievements are but little fragments of boundless possibilities. The largeness of our ideal and the smallness of our accomplishment make one believe that God has so ordered things that there is a place where the unfinished tasks can be complete and the unrealized ideal is brought to fruition.

In a comprehensive sermon on "Some Reasons for Believing in Immortality," Dr. Albert W. Palmer[9] gives the fact of Christ as another reason for believing in immortality. Not only does the average human being believe in immortality but "the supreme spirit of all the world" believed in it, too. A clear consciousness of the eternal life characterizes his teachings: "Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." In connec-

[9] *The New Christian Epic*, p. 163. Used by permission of The Pilgrim Press.

tion with this thought Dr. Palmer stresses the resurrection. After they crucified Christ, in some mysterious way he came back to them. The method of his rising may not be entirely clear, but as Lyman Abbott once expressed it "the resurrection is one of the best attested facts of history."

Another idea which Dr. Palmer finds an evidence of eternal life is the far-reaching, deeply rooted truth of personality. He says that in the last analysis the one thing that we know most surely in the world is our own self-conscious existence. Man knows, he thinks, he doubts, therefore, he must exist. Borden P. Bowne's "personalism" by delivering man from the nightmare of materialism strengthens his faith in immortality. "If we believe in the conservation of energy, how much more reason there is to believe in the conservation of personality, the noblest and most mysterious form of personality." The modern psychology of the subconscious sheds many rays of light on the question of personality. It shows that our personalities are vastly larger than the cross-sections of them that we have hitherto known. These revelations of the height and depth of the personality of man furnish a basis for a satisfying argument for the continued existence of the human soul. It becomes easier to believe in the everlasting existence of the personality than it does in its extinction.

Dr. Burris Jenkins[10] says: "There are no proofs of immortality. No one can demonstrate, like a theorem in Euclid, that if a man die he shall live again. Some things are too great to be proved—like God, for instance. Dr. Jenkins, however, proceeds to tell us that Words-

[10] *The Drift of the Day*, p. 167. Used by permission of Willett, Clark and Colby.

worth saw keenly and far when he coined the phrase, 'intimations of immortality.' These intimations are all about us. All of nature's poetry sings to us of an endless life. The most independent minds, the most rational and stalwart thinkers of the generations[11] have believed in the far-reaching truth of immortality." Bergson has said, "I firmly believe that we maintain our individuality after death" and John Fiske expresses his creed in the sentence, "Belief in immortality is a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's works." And it was the greatest Teacher who ever trod the shores of earth who said: "Because I live ye shall live also. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

We may not know what the future hath of marvel or surprise. No man knoweth what lies beyond the river. The rest is silence. But down through the ages men have believed that the best is yet to be and that this mortal shall some day put on immortality. Without such a belief life would be naught but dust and ashes; we would hopeless lay our dead away, not once would a star shine through our cypress trees. One of the most precious gifts of the Christian faith is the assurance

> That life is ever lord of Death,
> And Love can never lose its own.

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[11] *The Drift of the Day*, p. 172. Used by permission of Willet, Clark and Colby.

XIII

SPIRITUAL VALUES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY PREACHING

If we mean when asking whether Christianity is practicable to ask whether a man can live a Christian life in this present world, we must answer in the light of Jesus' own life. A man cannot do it and do a lot of the things that most men want to do. He cannot do it and win a certain kind of success. Christianity is not practicable for a man conformed to the spirit and standards of the age or of the world. It is not practicable as a compromise. But if a man is a hero and not a coward, if he will follow the gleam wherever it leads, if he will go the whole length with Christ, he will find that it is really the only thing that is practicable. Everything else comes out sooner or later on a low level.[1]

Where men say religion has failed, rest assured it is a place wherein it has not been tried. Religion should not rest on the past. It should build on the past. Let us take off our hats to yesterday. Let us take off our coats for to-morrow. Traditional religion was adventurous religion. It was the old-time religion of which we sing and for which we pray. We need the old-time religion. But it must be old-time. It must be very old. It must go back to venturesome Moses who went up to Pharaoh

[1]McDowell, William Fraser. *Making a Personal Faith.* Used by permission of The Abingdon Press.

and demanded the release from oppression and repression of his people. It must go back to venturesome Abraham who moved out of the rut into a city with foundations—who went out of the tent age into the age of God and his eternal purpose. The Faith of the Fathers can never be made the faith of the children until the children put on the cloak of the fathers in personal initiative, adventuresome daring, and the essaying of the impossible.[2]

The power of God's spirit within our lives means vision. "He shall guide you into all truth." What a limitless view opens before us as we climb this mountain of faith; valleys of which we never dreamed; expanses far beyond the power of the human eye to see—these are the expanding fields of faith into which God would lead us. The souls that know such power are never tired, no matter how fatigued the body may be. Like Arthur Ewing at Allahabad, they see the future of a great nation won for Christ; like Keith Falconer in Arabia, they willingly reject the offer of a Cambridge professorship that they may speak to the Mohammedan world. Like thousands of our missionaries and pastors at home and abroad, the power of the Holy Spirit may be a telling and controlling force, which means hope and joy and peace in painstaking and constant service. Life loses itself in this splendid expression of devotion and the heart is happy all the time.[3]

And I like that story of one of England's greatest statesmen. He often went into the old family portrait

[2]Braunstein, Richard. Sermon: "Adventurous Discipleship," *Church Management*, March, 1929. Used by permission.

[3]Stone, John Timothy. *Places of Quiet Strength*, p. 191. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

gallery. He stood as if in worship before the portraits, and he could be heard to say again and again: "I will not forget. I will be true." One day he took his eldest son with him, and he said to him, "My boy, you must hear these people speak." "But, father," said the lad, "what can they say?" Then his father, pointing to each portrait, said: "This one says, be true to me. That one says, be true to thyself. That other one says, be true to your home. And that last one, which is my mother, says, be true to God. And my son, I go out from them saying, 'I will be true.'" And, brethren, that is the payment we can all make in the present for our debt to the past. Whatever be our patrimony, whatever be the good which those who have gone before have enriched or blessed our life with, we are stewards. And "it is required in a steward that he be found faithful." The truth is that unless we give back to the world something that costs us blood and agony, we shall have failed and failed miserably and shamefully to discharge our just and honorable debt. During his Egyptian campaign Napoleon pointed to the pyramids and cried, "Soldiers, forty centuries look down upon you." And so it is. "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead?"

I have a tryst to keep
With those who lie asleep.[4]

What have we really done to-day in worship? We have gathered in the consecrated place which the community has set apart for this highest act of life. We have heard, as we entered, the solemn notes of the organ

[4]Mutch, Andrew. Sermon: "Baptized for the Dead," *Best Sermons, 1925*, edited by Joseph Fort Newton, p. 320. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co.

bidding us be quiet and listen. We have undertaken to speak to Almighty God, believing that the eternal reality of the universe is kin to our spirits and that we may utter our human longings, confident of response. We have spoken words that Jesus used, and that his disciples have repeated through the centuries, words that utter the wish that reverence may humble our hearts, that great good will may prevail, that our daily needs may be forgiven, and that in the moral conflict that is ever upon us we may be victorious through the everlasting righteousness. No one can pray that prayer in earnest and fail of insight. If the Christian men and women and youth should ever pray the Lord's Prayer one Sunday morning, and mean it, there would come insight into our social problems that would carry us into blessed endeavors of friendship, justice, and peace.[5]

There is among us a multitude of spiritual wrecks. Some are sunk in the valley of covetousness, millions have fallen victims in the big broad valley of organized selfishness. There is the valley of spiritual dry rot within the organized church—myriads have fallen in this valley, many who

> . . . Diet still on mud
> And splash the altars with it.

Then there are in the souls of multitudes to-day fragments of wrecked faith, stray traces of what was once a life of religion in the Church. Everywhere one comes upon these dried-up relics of a former life. There is much unbelief among us. There is much of arid Christianity—

[5]Soares, Theodore G. Sermon: "Worship as Insight," *Week-day Sermons in King's Chapel*, edited by Harold E. B. Speight, p. 107. Used by permission of The Macmillan Co.

Christianity that is dry, dismembered, lifeless, void of warm enthusiasm, vision, and unity. Such was the world Christ came to save—a valley of shattered souls, disjointed, perplexed, sinning. As Paul puts it in the first chapter of Romans, a world "filled with all unrighteousness." Can these bones live? Can the dry bones in our modern valleys be raised to life? They can if we "prophesy." Ezekiel prophesied, and the whole valley of bones rose up to life. John Wesley prophesied, and the Methodist Church was born. William Carey prophesied, and the modern missionary enterprise sprang into being. The preacher prophesies in his pulpit from Sunday to Sunday, and here and there one rises up to walk in newness of life.[6]

Religion brings direction; a life of purposeful and unselfish activity rids us of harmful and morbid introspection. Religion, by centering the driving power of affection and of self-commitment in the surrender or dedication of the will to God, does away with a large part of the conflict within the soul. There will be intermittent warfare but the major campaign can be definitely and permanently won. At last we are integrated and liberated from the inner tension which saps our strength. Again, when one is in the right relationship to God in Christ one's conscience is at rest and one's soul is free from turmoil. Jesus creates delicate consciences which are intruments of torture to the self-willed, but he also brings an inner security, a sense of standing on solid ground, an inner harmony which is "the peace which passeth all understanding."[7]

[6]Lineberger, L. O. *Towering Figures Among the Prophets*, p. 116. Published by John C. Winston Co. Used by permission of the author.

[7]Stewart, George. *The Incarnation in Our Street*, p. 101. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

Of course God cannot give to a closed mind or a steeled heart. Did you ever try to give a Christmas present to a man of very great wealth who felt no need of any gift whatever? Did you ever give advice to a proud man who thought he already "knew it all"? Prayer means the opening of the soul to the spiritual influences that are playing all about us as the sunshine plays on the shutters in the morning. Open the shutters and see what happens! The thoughtful man dares set no limits to the power of prayer.

> There are more things in heaven and earth
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

After all, prayer is founded not on argument, but on experience. Through all human history, most men have prayed. Either prayer is the most widespread and indestructible of all human delusions, or it actually works changes in ourselves and in the world around us. In ourselves?—Of course; every psychologist knows that. In the world around us?—Only he who has tried it can answer.[8]

"When ye pray say, Our—Our Father who art in heaven." That is the way to begin. No man can get his mouth open and utter the first two words of acceptable prayer until he has in his heart that sense of sympathy which bids him say "Our." Not "My Father" nor "Your Father" but "Our Father"! And when you live, say "Our." It is the only way we can live aright. No man can say that any of the things he possesses are exclusively his own. My farms, my barns, my goods,

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[8]Faunce, W. H. P. *Facing Life*, p. 121. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

my money, my brains—all these are to be held in trust and to be used with that higher, finer sense of social obligation which prompts a man to say "our." Selfishness is sin and sin is the death of all that is best.[9]

The Cross represents to us the supreme and tragic culmination, the dramatic climax of all that is designed to defeat and destroy our highest and holiest ends and purposes. Arnold von Winkelreid, the hero of his people, rushing upon the spears of the foeman of his country, gathered them in a sheaf to his bared bosom that he might make an open way for his fellows. Pierced and bleeding, his seeming folly nerved his countrymen and gave them victory. His opportunity was dearly bought, but like other great heroes, he had learned the sublime lesson from the lips of the Nazarene: "He that loseth his life, shall find it." The prisoner who stood that fateful morning at Pilate's judgment seat had none to defend him, even the disciples forsook him and fled, but from that presence he went forth the mightiest conqueror the world has ever known. A lonely cross, from that day down to the latest hour, has been the high and holy symbol of obstacles and problems overcome, of opportunities seized and gloriously achieved.[10]

Years ago Strauss published an article entitled "Are We Yet Christians?" and the question is still thought-provoking. Are we Christians when the work that Jesus came to do is languishing for lack of men and lack of means? Are we Christians when men who created the name cross over sea and land to tell the gospel story,

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[9]Brown, Charles R. *Where Do You Live?*, p. 43. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

[10]Freeman, James Edward. *The Ambassador*, p. 206. Used by permission.

and we spend money for that which is not bread? Are we Christians when we lack the power to sweeten our commercial and civic and national life? We are only Christians as we follow the Spirit of the Highest and mount up with wings as eagles into the pure atmosphere of thought and conduct."[11]

It is the season of blossoming trees and the end of a perfect day. In low-hanging branches birds are caroling in a deluge of summer. The scene is Arlington and the Grave of the Unknown Soldier. It is the sacred hill of the nation. The capital spreads out below, a glorious panorama framed by silver-ribboned river and the blue distances. The rays of the departing day are touching into loveliness the white-domed temple of democracy and the city bordered by sylvan walks where cherry blossoms linger. Treading reverently that "city of the dead," their faces toward the city of the living, in a semicircle around the tomb of the unknown stand in solemn silence the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church—world leaders, from under all skies—planters of the trees of good will and understanding—prophets of the wilderness that is yet to blossom—Americans all, but with the map of the world on their hearts. The hour is too high and holy for frantic boast and foolish word. The whole round world seems tied with golden cords of brotherhood to that hallowed ground where beauty dwells and where the very throne of the presence is set up. All barriers are down, all partitions leveled. National frontiers are an impertinence from that high altar. The world is one. The sentinel soldier silhouetted against the marble curve of the columned amphitheater,

[11]Kerr, Hugh T. Sermon: "Dare We Call Ourselves Christians," *The Presbyterian Banner*, January 24, 1929. Used by permission.

guarding the tomb of his unknown comrade, speaks eloquently of the multitudes who went forth to die for that dream of oneness. The marble tomb of the unknown becomes a high altar, and the very memorial stones seems to be whispering, "It was for visions that we fell." One standing in the center of that group had recently pleaded, "Let us repent of race pride, race prejudice, and race bitterness; repent in America, repent in Asia, repent in Africa, repent in Europe. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. There is one gospel. We will not lose heart in it. Blood is thicker than water, and the human family is of one blood. We will labor everywhere to make a unity of spirit in the races of the whole world." Another of that company, just snatched from death and lately returned from sacrificial years in the awakening East, is to lift the world on arms of intercessory prayer. A pace ahead of the group he stands, with face uplifted, beholding the city which under God holds the key to the world's future. Not only he but all who stood that May day on that mount of transfiguration saw not only the city but also the king in his beauty and, beholding the lands that are very far off, were hearing one with pierced hands calling anew to the adventure of love. Each continent and the isles of the sea were lifted to the arms of the divine friendship. What an hour! The height on which we stood is the mount of vision to which one day the whole world will be lifted to the brothering heart of the Savior of men who said, and says, "Lifted, I will draw all men unto myself."[12]

The significance of the Gospel of Christ, so far as you are concerned, depends upon what you yourself have

[12]Harris, Frederick Brown. *The Blossoming Bough*, an Easter sermon, p. 22. Used by permission of the author.

experienced. Experience, and not authority, is your anchor. It is the same idea that Peter expressed when he wrote to the elect strangers scattered abroad. "If so be, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." If I am healthy and hungry, I do not want a lecture on dietetics. I want a good square meal. I can better endure the lecture afterward. Eating is an experience we can all understand, and we can understand it, too, if we have, as the Psalmist said, "Tasted the Lord and found him good." Did Mary see him? Did Peter see him? Did the disciples see him without Thomas? Did Thomas see him afterward with the rest? Did those fortunate disciples see him on their walk to Emmaus? The records say yes. But have you seen him? This is the all-important question.[13]

Man, too, can reach out and up into the invisible and the imponderable around and above him; can establish relations of give-and-take with the order of the universe which we cannot fully comprehend, with the beauty which he cannot wholly realize, with the power and the goodness and the love which are greater than his own. Out of that give-and-take with the invisible above and beyond him have come such indestructible treasures as the proportions of the Parthenon, the harmonies and rhythms of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*, the thinking of Plato and Einstein, the odes of Wordsworth and Keats, the character of Christ. Such characteristically "religious experiences" as contemplation, prayer, and worship are the healthy functioning of these appreciative, responsible, and upreaching capacities in human

[13]Herrick, Everett C. Sermon: "The Anchor of Experience," *Boston Preachers*, edited by A. Avery Gates, p. 69. Used by permission of Fleming H. Revell Co.

nature; not to be stunted and starved, nor yet to be divorced from his other capacities and relationships, but rather to supplement and enrich them. And the faith of religion, which it cannot prove but only live by, is that what man thus makes his own, out of the invisible realm of truth and beauty and goodness and love in which and for which he chooses to live, is his to keep forever.[14]

Studdert Kennedy has well said that the one thing of which he is afraid is "not hell, but life without God, life without anything real to live for." A despiritualized world is a moral jungle. Life in a mechanical, materialized environment would be purposeless, inane, and futile. Every now and then materialistic philosophies have made their influence felt in the thought life of this or that generation and the result has been ethical deterioration. More frequently, however, has humanity been dragged to the low level of paganism by a practical materialism than it has been by systems of unspiritual metaphysics. In all periods of history life has tended to sag to the plane of animalism. Formalism takes the place of vital religion, indulgence that of righteousness, and then follows moral and spiritual bankruptcy. In these hours of crisis it is the voice of the prophet which must sound the "great recall," which must proclaim the old but ever-vital truth of the primacy of the spiritual.

The minister who measures up to the high calling and traditions of his profession must wear the mantle of the prophet. There are comparatively few contemporary books in the field of homiletics which do not have some-

[14]Gilkey, Charles Whitney. Sermon: "The Influence of Atmosphere," *Preaching in the New Era*, edited by Elmore McNeill McKee, p. 114. Used by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Co.

thing to say about "the preacher as a prophet." But this is not the only capacity in which the minister must function. One of the recent volumes of lectures to preachers and embryo preachers[15] has chapters entitled "As a Prophet," "As a Preacher," "As Priest," "As Churchman," "As Administrator." Yet if the prophetic mission of the man of the pulpit is crowded out by the pressure of multifarious demands, the preacher has failed in the most essential part of his work among men.

The task of a prophet, though, is not confined to explaining spiritual ebbs and flows and giving a reason for them. His message is not alone to society, but to the individuals who compose it. A person has a hard time to preserve his ethical integrity in an age of spiritual destitution. The life of the spirit is the key to existence, and the prophetic preacher is a teacher of the eternal truths which have to do with the inner life of man. All homiletical roads lead to this ultimate goal. If the so-called "social" preaching does produce a fruitage which can be measured in terms of the spirit, it is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. A plea for the industrial righteousness and financial justice is fundamentally a demand for such an adjustment of the economic world that the higher nature will not be crushed in an untoward and brutal environment. Preaching that emphasizes community betterment in pleading for better sanitation, better schools, and better homes deals with means rather than with ultimate objectives. The dominating reason for the stressing of the need of these improvements is the fact that in the community where the physical and civic standards of life are low, the soul is more than likely to shrivel or petrify. The incidents

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[15]Merrill, William Pierson. *The Freedom of the Preacher.*

in the growth of the soul must always be at the center of the message of the pulpit.

This, of course, does not circumscribe the preacher in his range of material. The field of genuinely spiritual preaching is as broad as life itself. To attempt to classify its different types would be futile. Whatever its style, its method of approach, or the brand of its theology, it gives preëminence to eternal values; its primary aim is to help man to covet the best gifts, that is, the spiritual gifts. Sometimes this is done through the denunciation of sin. Other preachers attain this final objective by means of the proclamation of the evangel of the Love that will not let man go, no matter how far he has wandered or how low he has sunk. Still others preach a gospel of comfort which inspires faltering, burdened men and women to face life's realities with lighter hearts and braver spirits. These are but few of the facets of the message of the prophet of the life spiritual. There are hundreds of phases of the gospel of the living Christ by means of which the preacher can open for a congregation the doors of a larger, richer, and deeper life.

A sermon that in a unique but convincing manner calls man to give preëminence to the invisible is "Out of the Clay" by Dr. John G. Fleck.[16] We are made of clay. We live upon clay. We are mere earthen vessels. There is even a danger that we may be clay-minded. This does not necessarily mean evil-minded. The clay mind is the mind that is always concerned with earthly matters. It never gets away from the clods, never scales the higher levels. It deals only with "things." It looks upon ideals as "bunk." To it beauty is worthless and culture the hall mark of the snob. Sympathy is but a

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[16] *American Lutheran Preaching*, edited by Miles H. Krumbine, p. 139.

product of maudlinism. Any agitation against war to the clay-minded is but the chimerical ravings of ideologists. Of course, man must express himself. Man must do what he wants to do or he will develop some of those dangerous disturbances which we in our pseudo-learning call complexes. Back of the earthen vessel is spiritual reality. The best things in the universe are not of clay. "The way from the clay to the stars of life is first to discover the unseen Reality, to achieve unbounded faith in the living, loving Christ, and then follow Christ by seeking, finding, and loving the best in human life, hidden away in an earthen vessel."

Another sermon dealing constructively with the problem of man's adjustment to the spiritual facts of the universe[17] is preached from the enigmatic but beautiful words of Psalm lxviii:13. "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The first task of a preacher utilizing this text is to explain its meaning. This is easier said than done. Nobody knows the exact thought to which the verse gives expression. Charles Haddon Spurgeon called it a "difficult nut to crack" and many other Biblical students have agreed with him. Some believe that the passage is meaningless because it has been wrested from its context. Others look upon it as a mistranslation. Dr. Davidson, however, finds a key to the significance of the passage in a volume entitled *Life in Egypt* from the pen of Miss Whately, daughter of the famous Archbishop of Dublin. In this volume she tells us that the houses in Egypt have flat roofs which are generally covered with an accumulation of rubbish. Especially noticeable is the large col-

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[17]Davidson, Thomas W. *The Fascination of the Unknown*, p. 76.

lection of old pots and pans. During the heat of the day doves hide themselves among this débris in order to escape from the heat of the sun; but a little before sunset they emerge from the pile of pots and pans and rise, flying in circles. Seen against the light the pigeons seem to be turned into silver, while seen under the light, the slanting rays of the sun apparently paint them in colors of gold. This exegesis satisfies Dr. Davidson and it bears all of the hall marks of correctness.

But what is the relation between the idea of a dove covered with silver and with feathers of yellow gold lying among pots and "The Conquest of Environment?" The sermon is outlined as follows:

I. The conquest of environment begins with aspiration. The doves knew that their real environment was not among pots and pans. Out of dust and débris of degrading experiences a people may rise clarified in vision, dignified in bearing and beautiful in character. There is no easy way to the stars; the soul of a nation must aspire.

II. The conquest of environment means not only aspiration in national life but elevation in personal character. The doves rose clean from their dirty surroundings. No man can escape contact with the rubbish heaps of life, but he must keep his soul clean. He can do it two ways. First, by detachment of soul. An environment can be conquered by keeping the soul clean. Secondly, the same result can be attained by dwelling in the spirit of thankfulness upon past mercies. If we turn the wings of the soul toward the sun they will shine as gold. A gifted woman once wrote in the birthday book of a friend the wish, "That life for me may never lose its halo." Christ can touch the plumage of life with his glory.

III. Environment can be conquered by transfiguration. If we turn toward the light God can and will transform us. Thus we conquer our environment through Christ. Environment may be conquered by aspiration, elevation, and transformation. But of these three the greatest is transformation.

As one reads the sermonic literature which has to do with the upbuilding of the spiritual life of the men and women of to-day he cannot help being impressed with the thought that the modern prophet has all of life upon which to draw for material. Preaching is interpretation of life. There is much in common between the range of the subject matter of the minister and that of Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, and other great uncanonical preachers. The reader, or the hearer, of a sermon finds himself facing the deeper issues of life as interpreted by a man with a seeing eye, a hearing ear, and an understanding heart.

Dr. Frederick F. Shannon begins a sermon based on the miracle of the loaves and fishes by commenting on the greatness, the variety, and the richness of the minister's material.[18] "He is like a miner suddenly come upon inexhaustible diamond mines and yet unable to market the precious gems; like a farmer driving a lone wagon into the vast wheatfields of the West for the purpose of hauling away all the golden grain; like a child bailing out the Atlantic with its tiny bucket, or scooping up the sand along the shore with its toy spade. The gospel is a spiritual diamond mine, an infinite wheatfield, a measureless ocean." The sermon from which this quotation is taken is itself an excellent example of preaching which promulgates an interest in and

[18] *The Country Faith*, p. 87.

an appreciation of the spiritual entities. Its title is "Spiritual Enlargement" and its fundamental thought is that the secret of spiritual growth lies in getting ourselves, our dear ones, our unsaved brothers to the Christ of God. The sermon continues with the discussion of the three accessories of spiritual enlargement—thanksgiving, distribution, and multiplication. "Jesus therefore took the loaves, and having given thanks"—here is the first lesson to be drawn from the story of the miracle. An attitude of thanksgiving broadens, enriches, and sanctifies life. The text further reads as follows: "And having given thanks, he distributed." Undistributed activity or energy of any kind either diminishes or explodes. In the spiritual realm this law is steadfast and undeviating. Then comes the truth of multiplication. Five loaves and three fishes fed the thousands. Undistributed, our paltry loaves and fishes remain petty, puny, and microscopic. Distributed among hungry, aching lives they are multiplied by the thousands. The eternal law of the eternal Christ is this: "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom."

Through all of the generations it has been agreed that prayer is an essential part of the spiritual life. Yet there are surprisingly few sermons in print dealing with this theme. But this does not mean that it is ignored in the world of religious thought. *The Meaning of Prayer* (1915), by Harry Emerson Fosdick, has circulated by the hundreds of thousands. At least ten collections of pulpit prayers have been published within the past two decades. Worship, its meaning and its technique, is a favorite subject for discussion among religious writers.

The Lyman Beecher Lectures for 1927 dealt with this theme.[19] But for some reason or other prayer does not seem to be a favorite subject among American preachers. Yet the fact remains that this is a rich field of homiletical suggestion and that it has within it untold possibilities for the upbuilding of the spiritual life. If a person needed any evidence to convince him of the truth of this statement, he would not need to go any farther than the twenty-three discourses in Alexander Whyte's volume *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*, which is one of the greatest volumes of sermons that has come to us from across the water in our generation.

Even if there is in our homiletical literature an apparent poverty of sermons on prayer, we must not infer that there is an absolute bankruptcy. American preachers have said, and are saying, some things on this subject which are answering some of the deepest needs of the mind and soul of man. What is possibly the most typical discussion of the meaning and significance of prayer that is available is not in sermonic form.[20] It does, however, synthesize what the enlightened pulpit of to-day is saying in regard to this fundamental thought of Christianity. Prayer is older than history. It is coextensive with human life. Men of all degrees of culture in all periods of history have grasped at this golden chain which binds the earth to the feet of God. Like a mountain stream it has worn many channels of expression. The first of these is adoration, the recognition of God as living, personal, holy, and supreme. Another is thanksgiving. Daily we are the recipients of the divine favor from God from whom all blessings flow. Ingratitude is a despicable trait even in our human relations. To take

[19]Sclater, J. R. P. *The Public Worship of God.*

[20]MacCallum, John Archibald. *Now I Know*, p. 122.

all of God's gifts without a word of thanksgiving would be the quintessence of the contemptible.

A third channel is confession. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Man is prone to falter and stumble. Even Paul said with poignant sorrow that when he would do good, evil was present with him. It is fitting and proper that struggling humanity should cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." A tendency to boast of one's spiritual victories is the sign of a superficial mind and a circumscribed soul. A deep sense of humility characterizes the saints of all age. The desire to confess sin before the throne of the infinite is an evidence of a genuine, aspiring religious life.

Two other channels are meditation and intercession. The first of these is a requisite to prayer. Without it there can be no real prayer. The power of meditation is an art which our generation needs to cultivate. An age in which speed has become a disease should, through meditation, acquire steadiness of vision and moral poise. By meditation man can enter into God's presence. Intercession means entreaty for others. An intercessory prayer is the result of human sympathy. Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) once said, "Be pitiful! Every man is fighting a hard fight." This sorrow for our fellow men in their poverty, pain, superstition, and ignorance, their apparently hopeless striving, and their heavy burdens causes the Christian to bow before God with a prayer of intercession upon his lips.

Another channel of prayer is the prayer of asking. Some think of prayer only in this way. A prayer of petition may be selfish and materialistic. Yet when man turns to God with an unselfish, noble request upon his

lips he is approaching his Father in heaven in a spirit of reverence and love.

These channels give an adequate idea of what prayer is. It is true, though, that they do not necessarily answer the objections made to prayer. Some claim that God knows our needs; therefore it is futile to mention them to him. Others contend that the answering of a prayer would abrogate the laws of the universe. The first objection falls down of its weight. No one can intelligently think about it five minutes without perceiving its speciousness. Such a position does not take into consideration the interaction between God and man. If God is a person, prayer means much, otherwise it signifies nothing. To avoid prayer because of God's omniscience would shut upon mankind the gates of intimacy with the all-loving, infinite Father. The second objection could be treated more lengthily. But it must suffice here to say that prayer is not necessarily divorced from intelligence. Most prayers do not ask that the laws of the universe be abrogated. These so-called laws are but descriptions of the way in which events follow each other. Very frequently, the course of events is changed by the intervention of man. It is certainly not without the realm of probability that the intervention of God in the same way may bring about changes.

In the above paragraphs there is a summary of the best that is now being thought and said about prayer. But the ultimate test is pragmatic. Prayer begets strength. Man is so constituted that he wants to pray, and in prayer he receives comfort and strength.

We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.

But how limitless is the field upon which the preacher

can draw for material for sermons which furnish food for the soul of man. When all has been said this is his chief task. In 1906 Marcus Dods said: "I do not envy those who have to fight the battle of Christianity in the twentieth century. Yes, perhaps I do, but it will be a stiff fight." That stiff fight which the Scottish preacher and teacher prophesied is now on. No matter what may be the conclusions of the scholar in his library, the men who are bearing the burden and the heat of the day in our American pastorates tell us that never did church work pull quite as hard as it does to-day. The community in which church attendance has not decreased in the past two decades is the very rare exception. Energies that should be devoted to the upbuilding of the kingdom are being wasted in social futilities. He who would live the life of the spirit must wage a never-ending war against ever-present forces of paganism. In such a generation the preacher is the chief conservator of the eternal spiritual values. It is he who more than anyone else must keep the fires of idealism burning upon the altars of American life. This he can do only by emphasis upon the unshaken and unshakable truths which are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He can say to the men of any generation, "Earth changes but thy soul and God stand sure."

THE END

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